

ADHD

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



What is ADHD?

'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (ADHD) refers to a neurological condition with behavioural symptoms that include poor concentration, restlessness and fidgeting, impulsiveness and being easily distracted. ADHD is the most common neurological condition in the UK. It affects around 2 to 5 per cent of school-age children and is more common in boys than girls. For most people ADHD is a life-long condition, although the symptoms usually improve with age. However, some people may continue to experience difficulties into adulthood.

Characteristics of ADHD

There are two types of behavioural symptoms that characterise ADHD:

- **Inattentiveness** – signs include: having a short attention span and being easily distracted; appearing forgetful or losing things; finding it difficult to listen or follow instructions; constantly changing activity.
- **Hyperactivity and impulsiveness** – signs include: being unable to sit still or to concentrate on tasks; excessive movement or talking; interrupting; acting without thinking; having little or no sense of danger.

The behavioural symptoms that lead to a diagnosis of ADHD are usually noticeable in children before the age of six and will be seen in more than one setting (such as home and school). Some people with ADHD also have learning difficulties and problems with sleep. ADHD is also common amongst people who have autism.

Children who only have difficulties with inattention tend to be diagnosed with 'attention deficit disorder' (ADD), which can go unnoticed because the symptoms may be less obvious.

Causes of ADHD

The exact causes of ADHD are not known. It tends to run in families and research suggests that parents and siblings of a child with ADHD are four to five times more likely to have the condition themselves. Various other risk factors are thought to play a part in ADHD but firm links have not been made, so more research is needed.

Types of therapy

There is no known 'cure' for ADHD but there are a number of therapies and interventions that can help to manage it, including:

- **Behaviour therapy** – uses a system of positive reinforcement to help parents, families and sometimes teachers to encourage improved behaviour in children with ADHD.
- **Diet and exercise** – the NHS recommends regular exercise and a balanced diet for children with ADHD. Cutting down on certain foods such as sugar can help with symptoms – speak to your GP or a dietician for advice on changes to diet.
- **Medication** – a number of drugs are available to provide short-term treatment for ADHD and to



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help people to feel calmer and to concentrate. Four drugs are licensed in the UK – methylphenidate, dexamfetamine, lisdexamfetamine and atomoxetine.

- **Social skills training** – using role play and drama to help children learn how they should behave in specific social situations.
- **Talking therapies** – regular contact with a counsellor, psychologist or psychotherapist is known to help children better understand and manage their condition.

Ask about

- **Information, Advice and Support (IAS)** – Amaze supports families of children and young people with SEN and disabilities in Brighton and Hove. We have a helpline, publications and a website. We run workshops and courses and can offer one-to-one support with EHC planning and making DLA and PIP claims. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289** or visit: www.amazebrighton.org.uk.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – diagnoses, assesses and supports children and young people with mental health issues. Referrals to CAMHS should be made by a professional such as your GP, health visitor or the school nurse. CAMHS also runs a parent support group for families of children diagnosed with ADHD. Call CAMHS on: **01273 718680**.
- **Compass Card** – a free leisure discount card administered by Amaze for 0 to 25 year olds with SEND registered on The Compass who live or go to school in Brighton and Hove or West Sussex. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289**.
- **Early Help Hub** – a local authority service that offers support for the whole family on parenting, employment, anti-social behaviour and emotional wellbeing. To find out more, speak to a teacher, social worker or someone who is already working with your family, or call: **01273 292632**, or email: earlyhelp@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk.
- **Making a claim for DLA** – if your child's care or mobility needs are significantly greater than those of their peers you may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance for them. Find out more at: www.gov.uk. Amaze can give you advice and practical support with making a claim. Call the helpline on: **01273 772289** or email: helpline@amazebrighton.org.uk.
- **Parent support groups** – There are lots of parent-led groups for children with disabilities in Brighton and Hove. Some are for all children with SEND and others for children with specific disabilities. See a full list of local groups at: www.amazebrighton.org.uk/services-and-support/parent-support-groups.
- **Triple P positive parenting courses** – Amaze runs these courses to help parents of children/ young people with SEND to manage behaviour and stressful situations. Call: **01273 772289** or visit: www.amazebrighton.org.uk/services-and-support/training-support-groups

Further reading and useful links

- **Survival strategies and Looking after you fact sheets** – for these companion fact sheets visit: www.amazebrighton.org.uk/resources/publications/fact-sheets.
- **ADHD Information Services (ADDISS)** – Information and resources on ADHD. Visit: www.addiss.co.uk.
- **MindEd for Families** – provides materials for parents and carers of children and teens struggling with mental health issues. Visit: <http://minded.e-lfh.org.uk/families/index.html>
- **Young Minds** – the mental health charity for young people has a section of their website devoted to ADHD with fact sheets and advice. Visit: www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people/whats_worrying_you/ADHD.

