



## BRIDGE ROAD FACT SHEET

### ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

*NB: The information in this document has come from the websites listed below in the reference section. Bridge Road School has created a summary of useful information relevant to the families and students that attend our school.*

The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne states that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a chronic problem that results in poor concentration and control of impulses. It can affect a child's learning and social skills and can have an impact on family functioning.

#### Signs and Symptoms of ADHD

Common signs and symptoms of ADHD include:

- **Inattention** – difficulty concentrating, forgetting instructions, moving from one task to another without completion
- **Impulsivity** – talking over the top of others, losing control of emotions easily, being accident prone, acting without thinking
- **Over-activity** – constant fidgeting and restlessness.

It is important to remember that all young children have a limited attention span and sometimes do things without thinking, but only a small number of children have ADHD. If your child has more than one of the symptoms of ADHD, the symptoms are causing problems for your child, and they have been on-going for more than six months, you should have your child assessed for ADHD.

#### Causes of ADHD

ADHD is a complicated disorder that doesn't have a single cause. It presents differently in each case and for this reason, a personalized plan is often a beneficial remedy.

Some of the things that can contribute to ADHD are the following:

- **Genetics:** ADHD can run in families. If a parent has ADHD, a child is over 50 per cent more likely to also have it. If their sibling has ADHD they are 30 per cent more likely to have ADHD too. As we learn more about genetics, some theories are emerging about links to potential mutations that may also increase the risk.
- **Prenatal health:** Issues in pregnancy are associated with a higher risk of ADHD in the child.
- **Toxin exposure during pregnancy:** Another theory is that exposure to things like pesticides, lead, and plastics during pregnancy can increase risk.
- **Diet:** A healthy diet is always important for health but those with certain dietary habits are at higher risk for ADHD. Research shows that risks include high sugar, low nutrient foods, and foods with additives.

- **Modern education:** It's thought that some cases of ADHD are not physiological but are a symptom of a one-size-fits-all education system. In fact, some experts argue that the best remedy for ADHD would be a change in the education system.

Often it is a combination of these causes and not just one, which is why treatment also varies from child to child. Carers of children with ADHD often become the primary researchers and advocates, pulling in and testing resources to see what is helpful.

## Diagnosing ADHD

If you're concerned about your child's behaviour, your GP is a good place to start. Your GP might refer your child to a paediatrician, a psychologist or a child psychiatrist for a diagnosis of ADHD or other condition.

The diagnosis process might include most, if not all, of the following:

- an interview with you and other primary carers of your child
- an interview with your child
- behaviour checklists that you and/or your child's carers and teachers fill out
- discussions with your child's teachers or carers

Your child might also have other tests, including:

- developmental, learning, educational or IQ checks
- language, speech and movement checks
- general health checks
- Vision and hearing tests.

## Managing ADHD

Managing ADHD in children is about first accepting that your child will behave in challenging ways. But you can work with health professionals to develop a **behaviour management plan**. A plan can make the behaviour easier to handle.

Developing a behaviour management plan for your child involves getting a balance between what you expect your child to do and what your child actually can do. It's also about setting up a daily routine, rules and consequences for your child's behaviour.

To get the balance right, a behaviour management plan might include:

- behaviour strategies, including strategies for the classroom, for good sleep and for healthy eating and physical activity
- support for any other learning, language, movement and emotional problems your child might have
- Medication.

The best plans are usually **based on sound professional advice that takes into account what suits your child and family**. Plans should also consider all aspects of your child's life, including your child's needs and responsibilities at home, at school and in other social settings.

## Behaviour Strategies for ADHD

Behaviour strategies focus on teaching your child the skills they need to increase their cooperative behaviour and reduce their challenging behaviour.

## **Clear Verbal Instructions**

Your child will find it easier to behave well if they have a good understanding of what you want them to do. Clear, easy-to-follow verbal instructions with demonstrations will help.

You can help your child to follow verbal instructions by:

- keeping instructions clear and brief, with the shortest number of steps
- showing your child what to do – for example, ‘Please pick up the clothes from the floor and hang them up in the cupboard’
- keeping eye contact with your child
- Asking your child to repeat instructions back to you to make sure they have understood.

## **Tiredness Levels**

All children find it easier to behave well if they’re not tired. You can stop your child from getting too tired by:

- providing healthy food options for longer-lasting energy and concentration
- building rest breaks into activities
- doing learning tasks like reading or homework, and then doing some physical exercise for a little while
- being ready with a few fun but low-key activities like picture or sticker books – your child can do these if she starts to get overexcited
- getting your child into good sleep habits, like getting to sleep and waking up at much the same time each day
- Keeping screen time to a minimum during the day and making sure all electronic devices are switched off at least an hour before bed.

## **Regular, Predictable Routines**

[Routines](#) (click link) help children feel safe and secure, which can encourage good behaviour.

You can set up routines and handle changes by:

- Talking to your child about his daily schedule. You can also ask teachers if they can keep a copy of the school schedule where your child can see it
- using lists, pictures of your child’s routines and/or timetables
- letting your child know in advance about changes – for example, ‘In five minutes, you’ll need to brush your teeth and get ready for bed’
- Limiting the number of choices your child has to make – for example, instead of saying, ‘It’s time to get dressed. What do you want to wear?’ you could say, ‘It’s time to get dressed. Do you want the green t-shirt or the red one?’

## **Social Skills**

Children with ADHD may need a bit of extra help learning to get along with other children.

You can help your child develop social skills by:

- rewarding them for helpful behaviour like sharing and being gentle with others
- teaching them strategies to use if there’s a problem with another child – for example, walking away or talking to a teacher
- Teaching them how to keep an eye on their own behaviour, using a short prompt like ‘Stop, think, do’.

## **Praise for Positive Behaviour**

Praise, encouragement and rewards for positive behaviour will make this behaviour more likely to happen again. You could try:

- getting your child involved in activities where they are likely to go well
- Making a big deal when they go well, even if it's just a small success to start with – for example, 'You finished that entire page of homework. You must feel so proud!'
- Going over the highlights for your child at the end of each day. You can also talk through things they might have had trouble with.

## **When Your Child has ADHD: Looking After Yourself**

Looking after yourself by asking for help and support is a big part of managing your child's ADHD. Here are some options for you to think about:

- Ask for help from family members and friends. If your child relates well to a particular family member, like an aunt or grandparent, that person might be able to go shopping with you, or spend some time with your child while you get some time to yourself.
- Speak to your child's teacher about classroom behaviour strategies that you can try out at home.
- Go to a support group for parents of children with ADHD.
- Talk to your child's health professional about any difficulties you're having.
- Learn about stress and how you can handle it.

## **REFERENCES**

<https://www.healthline.com/health/adhd/calm-children-natural-remedies#5>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/adhd/parenting-tips#what-not-to-do>

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/behaviour/adhd/adhd>

[https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Attention\\_deficit\\_hyperactivity\\_disorder\\_ADHD/](https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Attention_deficit_hyperactivity_disorder_ADHD/)