

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



Post-diagnosis information
booklet for young people

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Hey there!

We have developed this booklet to help you understand your ADHD diagnosis better.

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. ADHD affects how a person's brain works.

It's not a disease or an illness and you don't catch it. It's something that you are born with and it might affect you in different ways to other people who have ADHD too.

ADHD can be diagnosed at any age, sometimes during childhood and sometimes as an adult. ADHD can affect people of any gender or ethnicity.

[Click here](#) to learn more about ADHD.

Did you know?

- When you read this booklet, clicking on the blue highlighted (it looks [like this](#)) text will redirect you to a secure website with additional information.



Your ADHD diagnosis

If you are reading this booklet, it is because you've received an ADHD diagnosis. This can bring about a mixture of emotions, even if you were expecting it or even been hoping for it.

This can be particularly difficult if you don't know much about ADHD or what you have heard so far has been negative. Having ADHD will probably mean you'll face some challenges that non-ADHD (sometimes called neurotypical) people don't have to worry about but you can still be happy and successful in your life. [Click here](#) to read about famous people with ADHD.

This is easier if you understand your stressors and difficulties and how to best deal with these. Some people with ADHD find positive strengths in their differences so if you also understand and enhance these you really can thrive.

It is also important for your family and friends to understand your differences and areas of difficulty so they can support you to manage these as well. Each and every person with ADHD is different. It also has nothing to do with how intelligent you are.

The exact cause of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is not fully understood, although a combination of factors is thought to be responsible.

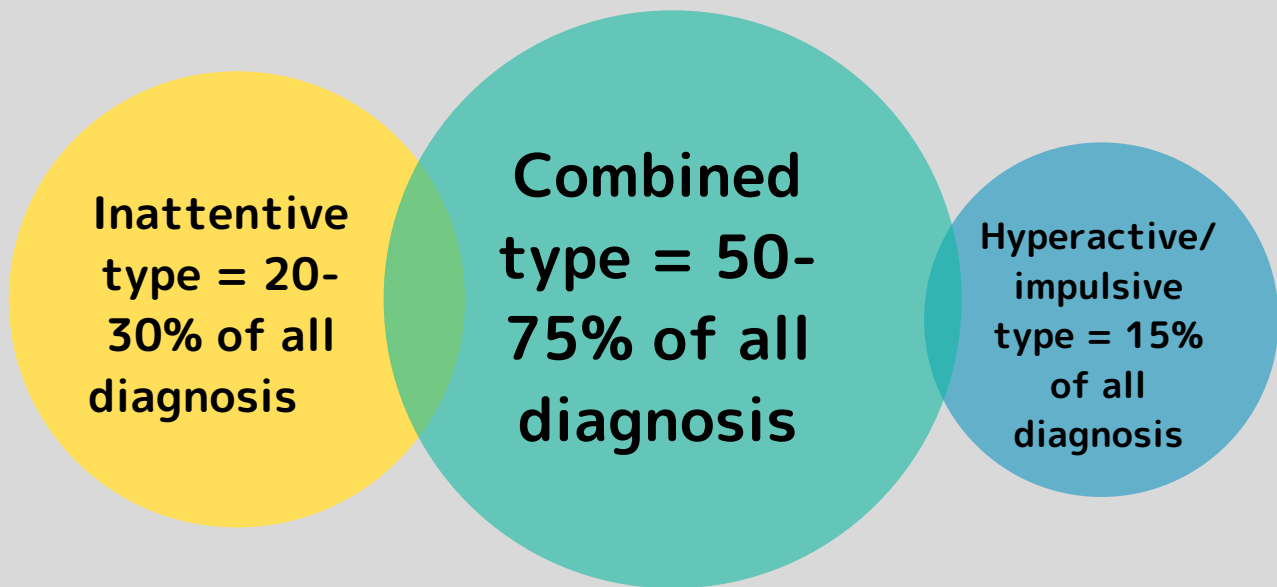
[Click here](#) to read more about this



Although each individual with ADHD has their own unique traits, they often face similar challenges. We've created this booklet to help you understand your diagnosis and find ways to manage any obstacles you may come across.

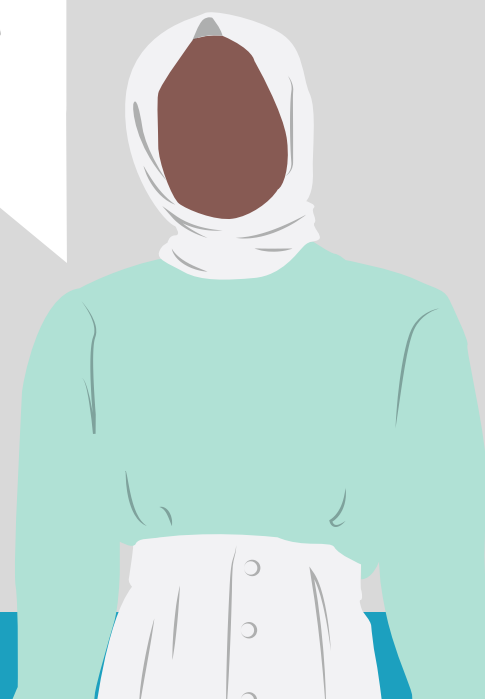
The different types of ADHD

There are three types of ADHD. One is the inattentive type and the other is hyperactive / impulsive type. However, it is most common to have the combined type of ADHD which means you have both inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms.



"You may feel like you are the only one experiencing the world this way, you are not. Talking about it and medication are the best things I've ever done"

- Young person receiving care from CAMHS



Symptoms of ADHD

To have been diagnosed with ADHD, you have to have a certain number of symptoms for 6 months or more and these symptoms will occur wherever you are, not just in school or college but also at home, when out with friends, whilst playing games or sport. These symptoms also need to have been present before the age of 12 and not better explained by another difficulty or condition.

Symptoms of hyperactive/impulsive type

- Feeling restless: this might mean wanting to move, like getting up a lot.
- Feeling fidgety: maybe wanting to squirm, tap your feet, fiddle with your hands.
- Wanting to chat / play loudly, you might get asked to do things more quietly
- Wanting to talk a lot: it might also be tricky to wait for your turn to speak and you might answer a question before it has finished being asked.
- Jumping in: you might interrupt others either during a game or conversation.
- It might have been said that you are driven by a motor – this really means it's like you have lots more energy than most people and you don't switch off.

Symptoms of inattentive type

- Being easily distracted: maybe by other people, something happening around you or simply by your own thoughts.
- Short attention span: you might lose focus or get bored quickly, especially if the thing you've been asked to do doesn't interest you.
- You might lose or forget things regularly and might feel disorganised.
- Making careless mistakes: an example of this might be you know how to use punctuation but you sometimes forget to use it.
- Appearing unable to listen or follow instructions: in school, you might remember step one of a task but not what you were supposed to do next, then if you ask you get told you should have been listening.

Difficulties with Executive Function

The easiest way to think about executive function is to think about this as your brain manager. Executive function is about being organised, setting goals, forward planning and getting things done. It also is in charge of working memory, emotional regulation and checking in with yourself. Basically, it's like the boss of the brain for getting stuff done on time and feeling good about it.

Imagine you are trying to complete a task – having a shower for example. Now that might seem simple but there's actually a lot of steps to complete in the right order for this to be a success. For example, before you get into the shower, you really need to have your products in the shower, your towel ready for when you get out, maybe you need to switch on the fan and lay down a bathmat for your wet feet afterwards but all this needs to be done before you even get into the shower.

For this task, your brain manager will need to be organising and planning the shower, thinking through everything you need to do and sort out before taking the actual shower. But if you have difficulties with executive function, it means your brain manager isn't doing its job properly which makes things harder to plan in advance as no-one is taking charge in your brain to get everything under control. In time, this might start to get you down as everything you do feels like hard work and may go wrong. This might lead to you feeling upset, frustrated and ashamed when something as supposedly simple as taking a shower doesn't go well.

Here's the good news. Whilst executive function is basically controlled by the way your brain is wired, the good news is that you can learn skills to help you get more organised. There is lots of support out there to help you manage your time, tasks and emotions. Because everyone with ADHD is different, not all of these strategies will work for everyone – the following is a list of ideas to start with to see what works for you.



Strategies to get organised

Lets Get Organised!

Try a game of Let's Get Organised bingo to explore some strategies to help your organisational skills.

If they are helpful, you can use these tips into your daily routine.

Break bigger tasks into smaller chunks

Take a step by step approach to tasks – maybe ticking off the smaller steps to see the progress you've made

Create a visual timetable of when you will do things especially if you have a deadline like homework/ coursework

Make list of things you'd like to get done and prioritise these

Ask for instructions or help with tasks or breaking tasks down

Try a body doubling app to mirror doing chores especially ones you find boring

Set a timer for five minutes and blast something you need to achieve

If there's no deadline to get things done by a certain time, why not write chores on scraps of paper and pick them out at random make a game of getting them done?

Use timers and list functions on your phone or tablet

Use calendars or diaries (online or paper) to remind yourself of deadlines / events / birthdays etc

To see when to start getting ready, can you see how long it usually takes? For example, if getting ready to leave the house in the morning takes one hour, can you set a timer for an hour before you need to leave

Organise your space – meaning you know where things are. This doesn't look the same for everyone

Can you use colour coding to help you spot what needs to be done quickly

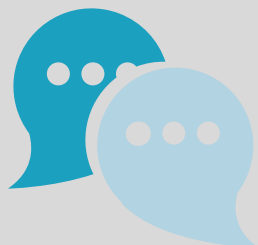
Clutter can get in the way of finding the things you really need and it can sidetrack you too. Can you ask a grown up or friend to help you let go some of the things you no longer need?

Find a home for things and label them so everything has its place

Schedule a time each week to return everything to where it should be

Communication

Communication can be broken down three ways: speaking and language, listening and non-verbal communication. ADHD can create difficulties in each of these areas but there are things you can try to help overcome these.



Speaking and language

Making yourself understood – It can be tricky to organise your thoughts with so many ideas buzzing through your brain. Sometimes this means that you can't say what you mean and people might misunderstand what you are trying to say. If an important conversation is coming up, it might help to write yourself some bullet points or key words so you plan out what you want to say.

Finding the right words – If you often struggle to find the words you want, you might fill the space with 'holding words' like erm until your brain locks into the word you wanted. This can create anxiety about speaking. You may also stammer or stutter as the part of the brain that creates speech may be wired differently for you. If this is the case, you can ask your lead professional about Speech and Language Therapy.

Pace, volume and tone – Pace is how quickly something is done. People with hyperactive type ADHD might talk very quickly. If you are excited, you might also raise your volume. If you've been told to slow down and stop shouting, this might sound familiar. Tone is the way that something sounds, it could be a musical instrument or the way that something is said. You might have heard someone say "don't take that tone with me!" This means they don't like the way that something has been said. This is because when we speak the tone often conveys our emotion, so the tone of our voice could be for example, happy, angry, sad, excited, sarcastic, or surprised. If you find yourself speeding up or increasing your volume, you might want to try to slow down your speech to make sure that people can keep up with what you are saying and give yourself time to choose the right words.

Following one thread – It might be that when you are speaking, you are in the middle of telling someone something and then another idea pops into your head so drift off on a side story. If it's important that you complete speaking about one thing only, maybe ask your audience to park the other idea and remind you that you said it so you can complete the side story afterwards.

What's the good news? People with ADHD are often talkative – this can make you the life and soul of a group. You may also have lots of interesting ideas because you are so creative which means conversations are rarely dull! Filling silences in conversations can also be really appreciated by other people in a group who may struggle to know what to say.





Listening

Focussing on the speaker – This can be a challenge for anyone, especially if what the speaker is saying isn't interesting! If you need to listen, for example in school or college, it might help you to take notes or doodle as this can actually help with listening.

Keeping track of the conversation – If lots of people are talking at once, it can be really difficult to keep track of who you are trying to listen to. It might help to face the speaker so you can watch their face and tune in to what they are saying or ask if you can move to a quieter spot where there is less distracting noise.

Asking questions – It can be tricky to wait if you have a burning question to ask but a speaker may appreciate not being interrupted. However, they also might love it that you are asking questions as it shows you are engaged with what they are saying. Asking questions also helps you to understand more about what they are telling you.

Hearing the detail – If someone is giving you a lot of information all at once, like directions or instructions, some of that can go in one ear and out the other, whether you have ADHD or not. To help with retaining the detail, it might be helpful to take notes or repeat the instructions back to them. If you are at school or college, you might ask your teacher if they have a slide with the task steps on so you can listen but don't have to memorise what to do at the same time.



Non-verbal communication

Waiting your turn – If you are interested in a conversation or have something you really want to say, it can be difficult to resist the urge to just say it. This can upset people who don't like the interruption. Try to notice the natural pauses when it's appropriate to ask questions or say the thing you want to say. Sometimes it can be difficult to work this out, try writing down what you want to say if you are worried about forgetting.

Noticing the body language – When people begin to step away this generally is an indicator that they are trying to draw the conversation to a close. This is something you can use if you need to take a break or remove yourself from a conversation if it's becoming too much for you.

Facial leakage – This doesn't mean tears from your eyes but the messages our face might give to a speaker without us meaning to. For example, rolling eyes, yawning loudly or frowning. These might convey messages of boredom or anger without meaning to. Try to be aware of how your facial expression might be making the person or people you are speaking to feel.

Communication Passports

A Communication Passport is for anyone who needs help to communicate important information about themselves. You can create your own passport to give people to help them understand you. [Click here](#) to learn more about communication passports.

Social Relationships

You may have found it tricky to make or maintain friendships as ADHD can make it more difficult to manage friendships. Here's some things that you might already have noticed you are great at and some top tips for being a brilliant friend.

Social cues – These can be tricky to spot, especially if you are in the middle of explaining something or talking about something exciting. Social cues include tone of voice, body language and facial expression. If someone starts to move away or folds their arms, it may show that they are done with listening and want to move on. They may start to look away or go quiet. These are very small cues but you can learn to read them. These might mean it's time to let the other person talk or end the conversation.

Hyperfocus — Often people with ADHD have something that are fascinated by and know a lot about. This means they are experts in that area, having a wealth of knowledge that can be really interesting to listen to and which you can learn a lot about

Oversharing – This means telling someone lots of personal details and whilst you might be ok with them knowing this information, they might not feel comfortable hearing about it. You might have told something to a friend only to later think, why on earth did I say that? This is a sign you might have overshared. If you are not sure if someone is ok with what you are saying, you could ask them, is this ok to talk about with you?

Empathy – Whilst you might miss social cues, often people with ADHD are really good at tuning into people's mood and knowing the right thing to say. Tuning into to how people feel is known as empathy. This might be because if you've struggled to feel listened to yourself, you know how important it is to feel valued by others which can lead to you being a very kind and supportive friend.

Being a great listener – part of being a good friend is letting others have their time to talk. This can be tricky if you have ADHD as you might want to jump in and this can make others feel like they aren't being heard. Try some 'active listening skills', like nodding, making eye contact and sometime reacting with a "mm" or a "hmm" to show you are listening, understand and are engaged with what they are saying. [Click here](#) for more active listening tips.

Being the entertainer - Are you great at being the entertainer? Some people with ADHD are amazing at story telling. They are often funny and creative which means they can tell the tale in the best possible way and entertaining others. You get to delight people and they get a great story.

Time blindness – Whilst you might be able to tell the time, this means not really knowing what five minutes feels like and how that feels different to an hour. This can lead to lots of running late and cancelling plans which can make friends think you are flakey. Try using alarms to help you get ready on time and having friends remind you about plans so you have time to get ready or use the diary/ calendar app in your phone to keep track of plans you've made.



Mental health and emotions

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition. This means you aren't ill and you haven't got a disease: your brain is just wired differently to the typical way a brain is wired.

Although ADHD isn't a mental health condition, having ADHD might mean you are more likely to develop one. Young people with ADHD often talk about feeling exhausted, overwhelmed or misunderstood. This can lead to [low self-esteem](#), [anxiety](#) or [depression](#). It is important to recognise and name your emotions. It's important that if you feel like this, you talk to a trusted adult about it. If your emotions sometimes feel too large or uncomfortable, you might like to try to some self regulation techniques. Click [here](#) to learn more.

[Click here](#) to view Self - Help Resources within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Did you know we have
variety of resources
created by different
CAMHS staff members for
individuals and their
families?

[Click here](#) to view our Help,
Support and Resources page.



Sensory Processing

If you have ADHD, you might find you also have heightened responses to certain senses like touch, taste, smell and sound. Essentially, we all have different responses to things that we sense. This explains why one person will love the taste of chillies while others can't stand it and why if two people are together, even wearing similar clothing, one can feel cold and the other feel warm.

It might be helpful to keep a note of what triggers you to feel uncomfortable so you can try to address them individually. For example, if strong smells such as certain laundry detergents don't smell good to you, can you try to smell another brand in the shop to see if there is one you do like?

[Click here](#) to learn more about sensory processing.

You can also create a [self soothe box](#), full of things that you enjoy experiencing. You might also like to try some [mindfulness](#) activities that can create calm. CAMHS has created Guidance on Sensory Processing which you can find [here](#). To view this, you'll need to set up an account and use the access code CAMHS SENSORY . If you need help accessing Guidance, we have a user guide [here](#)

Sleep

For some people with ADHD, it can be tricky to switch off making it difficult to fall asleep and even harder to get up the next morning. For others, they can fall asleep easily but wake easily through the night or really early the next morning. Sometimes you might experience a combination of all these things. Not getting enough sleep can make it harder to manage ADHD symptoms, reduce your ability to think, reason, and make you feel more emotional.

There are strategies for improving sleep such as having a consistent bedtime routine, thinking about what you eat, exercise and sleep hygiene which can all help positively impact on sleep.

[Click here](#) for more information about sleep, including top tips about getting a good nights sleep.

School

School can be a tricky place when you have ADHD. There are expectations around sitting still, listening, waiting for others, having to put your hand up, friendship issues and completing work. Things like this can make you feel like you don't belong and that you are always having to work twice as hard.

The good news is that now that you have a diagnosis, your school should be working with you and maybe your family to find ways to help you learn with your ADHD symptoms in mind. Every school has a SENCO – this stands for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and this person's job is to make sure that teaching staff, classrooms and work are adapted to support you to learn in the best way possible.

Your teachers might try certain things to help you focus such as:



Moving you away from doors and windows if this is distracting you



Giving you a task sheet with clear instructions of what is expected of you



Allowing you to use fidget toys, or encouraging you to doodle if this helps you to focus and listen



Providing written and verbal prompts to encourage you to stay on task

The main thing is to communicate to let your teachers know what would help you to learn. For example, if you need to move, they may ask you to hand out the books or sheets so you can get a break from sitting.

Schools also have a pastoral team – these are school staff who are trained in looking after your emotions and behaviour. You might have some 1:1 time with them especially if you are having a hard time accepting your diagnosis or your untreated ADHD has left you with some uncomfortable feelings. You might see someone called an ELSA (an emotional literacy support assistant) who can help you work through any feelings you want to talk about

Managing the symptoms of ADHD?

ADHD can be treated in various ways to help reduce symptoms. Options could include:

Lifestyle changes



There are changes that you could make with school and at home to help you manage your daily tasks. Many of these have already been listed above. We also have created some videos you can watch which have more information about managing ADHD. These are specialist videos called Guidance that you can find [here](#). You'll need to set up an account and use the access code ADHD. If you need help accessing Guidance, we have a user guide [here](#)

Self-care means making time to look after yourself and your wellbeing, both physically and emotionally. It's about doing things that make you feel better. It's important to find out for yourself the things that work for you. An example of this could include using 'thinking traps':



[Click here](#) to read our self-help guide that has been put together by specialists within CAMHS to give you helpful tips and advice on taking care of your mental health. Along with CAMHS, there are many other services that can help you with your mental health. Don't be afraid to reach out to them as well.



Therapy



Therapeutic intervention can include:

- Groupwork
- Counselling / 1:1 talking therapy

Therapy can help you find ways to better manage your ADHD symptoms. A therapist might work with you to teach you strategies that you can use in everyday life. For example, if you struggle to keep up with homework, they will be able to show you different ideas for staying organised and completing tasks.

You might work with the ELSA or pastoral team in school to work on ways to manage your symptoms.

Local charities, such as ADHD Solutions, offer workshops for young people and their families to learn coping strategies, self confidence and a sense of control over their ADHD symptoms. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Medication



ADHD medication (this can be on its own or alongside other treatment). You don't have to take medicine when you get a diagnosis of ADHD but it an option to consider.

Before we can think about prescribing any medication, there's some more information we will need to collect. We'll need to know about:

- Any heart problems you or other people in your family have.
- If you are on any other medications
- What your general health and fitness levels are like.

We would need to take your weight, height, blood pressure and pulse before medication is started.

There are two groups of medication that are used for ADHD:

- stimulant medication
- non-stimulant medication

Both these groups of medications will target the core symptoms of ADHD to try to help you improve focus, reduce hyperactivity and increase attention.

You and your family will talk with your prescriber (the person who works out your medicine with you) to work out which one might be right for you.

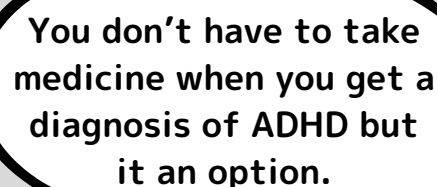
Whichever medication is started with you, if this doesn't give any improvements in your symptoms, then your prescriber will consider and discuss the alternative options with you which might work better.

The aim will be to find the right medication, at the right dose, giving you the best control of your ADHD for you, with as little side effects as possible.

You will have regular monitoring appointments to discuss and review your response to the medication.

ADHD is a lifelong condition but it can be managed in varying ways throughout your life. If medication is started, it doesn't necessarily mean that you will take medication your whole life. However, there will be times where medication is really helpful (such as in stressful times like exam season), but there may be periods in your life, especially as you reach adulthood, where it isn't needed and you can manage without medication altogether by using your own strategies.

If you've tried all of the sleep options mentioned in the [Sleep section](#), it might well be that medication such as a prescribed melatonin can help as children with ADHD often do not produce enough melatonin naturally. Melatonin is a hormone the body produces to help with sleep. Strategies for good sleep should always be tried before and alongside melatonin treatment.



You don't have to take medicine when you get a diagnosis of ADHD but it an option.

Further support

There are several charities and websites that provide information and support for you and your family whilst you wait for your assessment and beyond too.



[ADHD UK](#) is a charity run for people with ADHD by people with ADHD.



[The ADHD Foundation](#) is a charity working with young people with ADHD and families. They even have a '[Teenagers Guide to ADHD](#)'!



[ADHD Solutions](#) is a Leicester based charity that can support you if you have ADHD or are waiting for an assessment.



[The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service \(ADDISS\)](#) provide people-friendly information and resources about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



[Living with ADHD](#) provides advice for Teenagers, with and ADHD diagnosis, Parents and Teachers. Their website has lots of tips, resources and more.



[The NHS website](#) has lots of information about lots of conditions including [ADHD](#).



[Health for Teens](#) is an online service provided by the NHS. It includes lots of information in bite sized articles on [neurodiversity](#). There is also an [area specifically for CAMHS Leicester](#).



[Tellmi](#) allows an online safe and anonymous space for young people to discuss their feelings, seek support and receive counselling when necessary.



[Young minds](#) is a mental health charity for younger people. You can also text YM to 85258.



Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust has partnered with the [Solihull Approach](#) to offer free access to expertly designed online courses, including 'Moving up to secondary school for children with additional needs'. [Click here](#) to see the range of courses. Please use the access code 'CURVE'.

What to do in a crisis?

If you are concerned and require urgent mental health support:



If you need to speak to a mental health practitioner urgently, you can call the [Central Access Point \(CAP\)](#) on 0808 8003302 who have a 24-hour support line



You can call 111 or visit the [NHS 111 website](#). They can tell you what to do next if you think you need medical help right now. You can choose from different options



You can call or visit your local GP at the Doctors. [Click here](#) for support with talking to your GP about your mental health. Some of these tips can be used when discussing ADHD with your GP.