



Supporting Your Child with ADHD

What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurological condition that can cause inattention, hyperactivity and/or impulsivity, along with a number of related difficulties considered inappropriate for the person's age. ADHD is considered a life-long disorder that can have a negative impact on many areas of life. It can look differently depending on the person's age and gender.

How can you help your child?

It is important to know that ADHD is not caused by "bad parenting" or eating too much sugar. It is important you don't blame you or your child for having ADHD. Children with ADHD are not intentionally trying to be difficult. They have very real challenges with paying attention, staying focused and managing their behavior and emotions. Remember that all children want to do well, fit in with their peers and have positive life experiences.

Children with ADHD can often experience more negative feedback from parents, teachers and peers compared to children who do not have ADHD. It is important that treatment for ADHD focus on building positive experiences and interactions so that your child can experience more successes and improved self-esteem. Treatment for ADHD should focus on treating the whole child through a combination of behavior strategies, healthy lifestyle choices and medication.

The Four Pillars of ADHD Treatment

It is important to understand that treating ADHD successfully involves using a variety of approaches that work together. The four pillars of ADHD treatment include:

1. **Education.** It is very important that families learn more about ADHD by reading books, watching videos and talking about it with professionals. The more you learn about the disorder, the more you will be able to understand how the symptoms manifest in your child's life. In turn, you will have a better understanding about what types of changes your family could make to improve your child's quality of life.
2. **Strategies.** Once you have a better understanding about how ADHD affects your child's daily life you can start to implement specific strategies for problem areas. Strategies can be found in books, videos or by working with professionals who understand ADHD.



3. **Healthy lifestyle.** Our attention and mood are strongly influenced by the foods we eat, how much exercise we get and the quality and quantity of our sleep. A healthy lifestyle is essential to treating ADHD symptoms and can be considered the foundation of treatment. The effectiveness of other strategies depends on the person's lifestyle. Think about what small changes your family can make in each area of diet, sleep and exercise to improve your child's ADHD symptoms so they are able to get the full benefit of other treatments such as strategies and medication.
4. **Medication.** Medication can be a powerful tool when it is used in combination with the other pillars of treatment. It is important to be learn as much as you can about medication and what it can and cannot do. Having accurate and appropriate expectations for medication is also crucial, as it will help you to understand the importance of using other strategies and treatments in combination with medication, rather than relying solely on it.

Things for Parents to Remember:

- Learn about how ADHD specifically affects your child. All children are unique and no two children who have ADHD are the same or require the exact same approach.
- Be patient with yourself and your child. Reframe your child's difficult behavior and remember that it isn't intentional.
- Seek support from others and take care of your own health and well-being. You will have a lot more patience and energy to give to your child if you take care of yourself.
- Be flexible when trying different strategies. Some strategies that don't work now may work later. Other strategies may need to be revisited or changed to suit your child's needs.
- Be an advocate for your child within the school system. Have regular contact with teachers, ensure consistency in behavior management strategies and expectations for learning at both home and school. If working with the school is challenging for you, look for support from other parents who have this experience or work with the CanLearn Attention Clinic Team to discuss positive ways to work with school staff.

If you would like more information about how to support your child, including any of the four pillars of treatment, consider arranging an appointment with the CanLearn Attention Clinic Team or with one of our ADHD coaches. We would be happy to discuss these strategies in more detail and offer suggestions that meet your family's needs.