



Macquarie  
**ADHD**  
Parent Support Group Inc.

## The Parent Checklist

If you suspect your child has ADHD, or is being assessed, apart from prescribed medication, you might wonder what else you can do to help. As a parent (or carer) you're in the best position to observe behaviour and investigate all avenues, to ensure your child gets optimal learning outcomes and retains healthy self-esteem. Below are some suggestions from other parents that have gone before you on this journey.

- RECORDS** Start a folder to keep all school reports (e.g. NAPLAN), assessment results (sight, hearing etc) and important handouts. Specialists and schools will want to review reports so have copies ready.
- SCHOOL COUNSELLOR** If there have been difficulties at school, especially with behavioural issues in the class or playground, instances of bullying, displays of anger, symptoms of anxiety, not wanting to attend school or do homework, talk to the teacher first, then make an appointment with the school counsellor. They can perform tests which indicate whether your child may have learning problems and/or ADHD. Make sure you have a meeting with the counsellor to discuss the results and obtain copies of the tests (for your folder). The school counsellor should advise the Principal whether learning support is needed.
- CHILD EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST** If your school doesn't have a counsellor, seek an assessment from a private Child Educational Psychologist, who will undertake testing, including IQ tests, to determine the child's cognitive functioning. The test results can be used by class teachers to make appropriate "adjustments" for the child's weaknesses and learning style. A private assessment can also be taken to the Principal when approaching the school for learning support. Note: Elevated lead levels can impact on IQ, so you may wish to test for exposure through your GP or paediatrician if you think lead exposure is a possibility.
- PARENT TRAINING** Kids with ADHD are usually difficult to manage as they can be inattentive, hyperactive, distracted and oppositional. Parents and carers are often criticised for "poor parenting". However, ADHD is not the result of poor parenting! Having said that, everyone can improve their parenting skills and learn optimal ways to deal with difficult behaviour while keeping cool. The Triple P Parenting program is a starting point and the 1-2-3 Magic Program is highly recommended for young kids. Investigate whether your school, or other local health service and church groups run parenting courses. Borrow books from the library (the ADHD Centre has a small library of ADHD and LD specific books and DVDs). Consistent parenting from an early age will set up a good relationship between you and your ADHD child, which is invaluable during adolescence and beyond.
- CLASS TEACHER** It is important to advise your child's teacher/s of an ADHD diagnosis so appropriate concessions are made for their behaviour in class. Keep lines of communication open and ask the teacher to tell you of any issues. Teachers are not necessarily trained in working with ADHD children. So, if the teacher is expressing problems, you may be able to offer helpful suggestions. Become an ADHD expert and your child's advocate.
- GENERAL PRACTITIONER** Your GP can develop a GP Management Plan for your ADHD child. This includes assessing your child regularly, agreeing to management goals, identifying actions to be taken and treatment and ongoing services to be provided. Your GP is the key person for referrals to other specialists including paediatricians.



- **PAEDIATRICIANS** Diagnose ADHD (using DSM-5) and prescribe medications. Find one you are comfortable with as you will be seeing them regularly. (Note: When kids turn 18 they need to see an adult psychiatrist for ongoing treatment and medication scripts. There's a shortage of psychiatrists in Sydney that treat ADHD so plan ahead. The ADHD Centre can provide contact names and numbers.)
- **PSYCHOLOGISTS** In addition to the testing mentioned above, psychologists can be helpful when faced with parenting and behavioural difficulties. (Your GP may be able to refer you using a Mental Health Plan, or through the ATAPS program for Medicare covered visits and you may be eligible for free counselling from Local Health Districts). Parenting is easier if both parents use the same strategies, so ideally, involve your partner. Your relationship will probably be tested by your ADHD child and psychologists can also help with relationship difficulties. If your relationship is strong, you're in a better position to parent well. Additionally, older ADHD kids can benefit from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and strategies for dealing with anxiety, depression, addiction etc.
- **SLEEP ISSUES** People that are badly sleep deprived can display the same symptoms of ADHD. So ensure your child is getting sufficient sleep! If a good bedtime routine is not working, high dose Melatonin can help the body reset its clock, which often gets out of sync due to exposure of blue light from TVs, computer and phone screens. High dose Melatonin is available by prescription from your GP or paediatrician. If sleep continues to be a problem, a sleep study can be undertaken, where the child's sleep is monitored overnight and a report made. Ask your GP for a referral to a sleep clinic.
- **EYESIGHT TEST** If your child is having problems with reading and learning, Behavioural Optometrists are able to determine whether there are eyesight problems. Even though your child may have previously been tested, some problems may not be identified in the early years, and may need to be re-tested as they grow older.
- **HEARING TEST** Likewise, it may also be worthwhile having hearing tests to ensure there are no issues. These may be covered by the GP Management Plan or you can see Audiologists privately or try community health centres and children's hospitals.
- **FOOD & CHEMICAL ALLERGY TESTS** Some learning and behaviour issues may be related to food and chemical allergies and intolerances so it is worthwhile investigating. Tests are covered by Medicare with a referral from your GP (or paediatrician) at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Allergy Clinic. Alternatively, specialist Allergists can do testing.
- **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS** If your ADHD child has difficulty writing, is clumsy and un-coordinated e.g. at sport, cannot sit upright in class or have sensory modulation difficulties, then Paediatric Occupational Therapists can help with both fine and gross motor skill issues. They can also suggest strategies to reduce restlessness in the classroom.
- **SPEECH THERAPISTS** Speech therapists treat children with speech articulation and fluency issues (e.g. stutters), while, Speech Language Pathologists assess speech, language, cognitive-communication, and oral/feeding/swallowing skills to identify types of communication problems (articulation; fluency; voice; receptive and expressive language disorders, etc.)
- **SPORT** Encourage your child to have one or two sporting activities outside of school. Benefits include: having a wider range of friends than just those at school (useful if you need to change schools), improved self-esteem and fitness, a healthy body image and the production of dopamine, which improves calmness and focus. Green space has a known stress reducing effect. ADHD kids often enjoy Cubs and Scouts, Boys Brigade, Surf Nippers, youth groups, martial arts (where they learn discipline and respect) and swimming. Choose activities your child likes and has some aptitude for.

