



Information about  
**ADHD** in children and adolescents



# WHAT IS ADHD in children and adolescents?

It is characteristic for children and adolescents with ADHD that they experience disruptions to their attention, activity levels and control over impulsive actions. ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. ADHD was formerly known as DAMP.

All children and adolescents go through periods in their development where they challenge the limits of how to behave and challenge the frameworks that have been set up for them. This is entirely normal, and the child or adolescent can get through these periods with the support and guidance of parents, educationalists and schoolteachers. For children and adolescents with ADHD, there is a more fundamental disruption of their levels of attention, activity and impulsiveness.

One of the ways in which ADHD manifests itself is that the child or adolescent finds it difficult to concentrate for extended periods when playing, doing homework or sitting still in school. The child or adolescent quickly becomes bored, fiddles with everything, moves around and talks a lot.

Another characteristic of children and adolescents with ADHD is that they have an impulsive nature. They often act before they think, and can find it difficult to postpone their own need to be seen and heard. They can appear unpredictable, because they find it difficult to control their temper, have fits of rage and get into fights.

ADHD can be inherited, although psychological and social influences can also play a role. ADHD can be treated, and the earlier it is detected, the easier it is to begin the correct treatment. With treatment, it is

possible to help the child or adolescent to live a life where ADHD symptoms do not get in the way too much.

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## HOW MANY CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS HAVE ADHD?

- **Between three and five per cent of a year group have symptoms of ADHD.**
- **Around 60 per cent of children or adolescents with ADHD also experience difficulties as adults.**
- **For every girl with symptoms of ADHD, there are three boys with symptoms of ADHD.**

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## HOW LONG DOES ADHD LAST?

If the child or adolescent is treated for ADHD, there is a good chance that he or she will get significantly better.

Because ADHD is a congenital developmental disruption of the brain's function, the disorder cannot be cured. With the right treatment, however, it is possible to live a life where the disorder has as little effect as possible.

The course depends on the number and severity of the child's or adolescent's symptoms, as well as on how he or she reacts to the treatment. Children or adolescents with ADHD may develop behavioural disorder, anxiety, depression and specific learning difficulties. Many of these complications can also be treated.

# SYMPTOMS OF ADHD

A diagnosis of ADHD is made against the background of the child's or adolescent's medical history, as well as observations and information from parents, schoolteachers or educationalists. Psychological tests are used to investigate whether the child or adolescent has particular learning difficulties that have to be taken into consideration.

The symptoms are divided into attention difficulties, hyperactivity and impulsiveness.

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## ATTENTION DIFFICULTIES

- **Problems paying attention to detail and frequently making careless mistakes.**
  - **Problems with concentration, both when it comes to tasks at school, homework, play and tasks in the home.**
  - **Frequent failure to react when being addressed directly, giving the impression that he or she is not listening.**
  - **Failure to understand instructions**
  - **Often unable to complete tasks that he or she has begun.**
  - **Difficulties planning and organising play and tasks.**
  - **Does not like – or tries to avoid – tasks that are characterised by routine (not to be confused with the fact that routines can be a tool to manage everyday life with ADHD).**
  - **Tendency to lose items that are necessary for schoolwork or leisure activities, such as pencils, books, toys, racquets, football boots.**
  - **Easily distracted by sound and movements.**
  - **Frequent forgetfulness in day-to-day matters.**
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## HYPERACTIVITY

- **A restless feeling in the body: the child or adolescent fiddles with his or her hands, has restless legs when sitting or changes position the whole time**
  - **Leaving his or her seat in class or at the table**
  - **Running, clambering and moving around in a way that disturbs and annoys others**
  - **Disruptive behaviour when playing and difficulties remaining still**
  - **Often appearing a little too excitable (restless) and displaying violent or exaggerated physical activity that cannot be controlled**
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Some children or adolescents only have symptoms relating to difficulty in paying attention and have no symptoms of hyperactivity. This disorder is then known as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), and is seen most commonly in girls.

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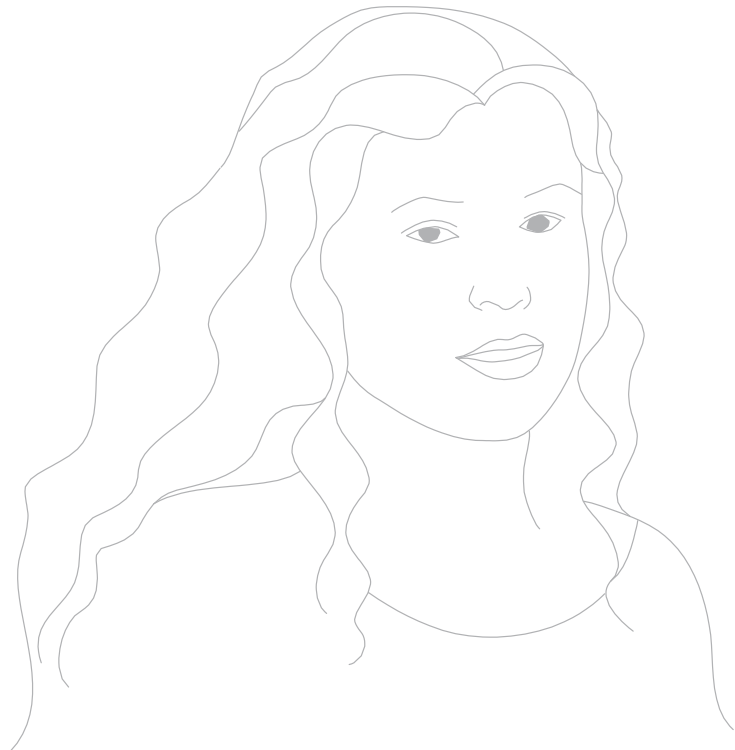
## IMPULSIVENESS

- **Often begins to answer before the person asking the question has finished.**
  - **A tendency to interrupt other people's conversations.**
  - **Difficulties waiting for his or her turn.**
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### HOW CAN A PERSON GET HELP?

Where ADHD is suspected, it is important to discuss it with the child or adolescent's GP or a school psychologist. They can help to clarify whether or not there are grounds to think that it is ADHD. If so, the child or youth is referred to the Mental Health Department for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for further examination and treatment.

If you need emergency psychiatric help, contact the 24-hour Psychiatric Emergency Department for children and adolescents in Glostrup. For more information, visit [www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/akut](http://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/akut) or the "Akuthjælp" app.



# TREATMENT OF ADHD

ADHD can be treated, and the child or adolescent can feel significantly better with the proper help and education regarding how to meet the challenges and difficulties that the disorder can entail on a day-to-day basis.

At Mental Health Services – Capital Region of Denmark, when ADHD is suspected the examination begins with a discussion to clarify whether or not ADHD is present. If ADHD is suspected in a child below the age of 15, the discussions will always be held with the child and the child's parents. This also applies to adolescents over the age of 15, unless otherwise agreed. The discussion is the first part of a thorough investigation.

The treatment of ADHD is continually adjusted to the needs and the age of the child or adolescent. Within Mental Health Services – Capital Region of Denmark, the therapist always draws up a treatment plan together with the child or adolescent, the parents and other staff.

The plan is approved by a consultant and must ensure that there is agreement on what is to be done. The actual treatment at the Mental Health Centre for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is handled by a doctor, in consultation with psychologists, nurses, educationalists, etc., and also takes place in co-operation with the family and relevant parties from the school and municipality.

ADHD is treated using a combination of advice, special education measures in schools and institutions, psychoeducation and possibly medicinal treatment.

## EDUCATION ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS (PSYCHOEDUCATION)

For both the child/adolescent and parents, a good understanding of symptoms, illness and treatment can help to make it easier to live with ADHD. For this reason, education about the illness is an important part of the treatment. Both the child/adolescent and parents or other close relatives can benefit greatly from taking part in the education.

A good knowledge of the symptoms of the illness and the reactions to them can help to resolve the challenges associated with having a child or adolescent with ADHD. When you are very familiar with the symptoms and reactions, it is easier to help the child or adolescent. It will often be appropriate to advise the child's or adolescent's teachers/educationalists about the condition. This helps to create understanding and co-operation regarding the treatment, and can also help to make it easier for the child or adolescent to undergo the treatment.

Education about mental illness is also called psychoeducation, and it forms part of the vast majority of courses of treatment under Mental Health Services – Capital Region of Denmark. You can ask the staff at the centre about the possibilities for participating.

## **MEDICINAL TREATMENT**

In cases where psychological and educational measures are not sufficient, ADHD can be treated with medication. Medication is never used as the sole treatment for ADHD, but is always combined with other forms of therapy. There are various options for medicinal treatment that the doctor will provide detailed information about.

Over the first few months of medicinal treatment and also later during the course of the treatment, it may be necessary for the doctor to adjust the dosage and the strength of the medication. Side-effects can also occur in conjunction with medicinal treatment. These can include reduced appetite, raised blood pressure and heart rate, and a tendency to depression and aggression. If side-effects occur, it may be necessary to speak to the doctor about changing to a different type of medication. If medicinal treatment is stopped, this must be done by agreement with the doctor.

## **HOW DOES THE MEDICATION WORK?**

The medication affects the brain, causing the core symptoms of ADHD to become fewer in number or less violent. The medication restricts the disruptive activity, restricts the uncontrolled behaviour, reduces impulsive actions and aggressive outbursts, and increases the ability to concentrate.

## **WHAT CAN RELATIVES DO TO HELP?**

The most important task for relatives is to ensure that the child or adolescent receives professional help. With children or adolescents, it can be difficult to distinguish between whether they are simply being a little more temperamental and restless, or whether ADHD is present. It is up to the doctor to decide.

Relatives of a child or adolescent undergoing treatment are best able to provide support by listening, being there for them, and making everyday life easier for the child or adolescent. Children with ADHD need a clear structure in their everyday lives. Relatives can contribute to this by agreeing things in advance, creating schedules of what is to take place during the day, or otherwise incorporating routines into everyday life. It is also extremely helpful to support the child in conjunction with leisure activities, to help arrange visits with friends or to help with homework, and generally speaking to try to find activities that are specifically arranged for children and adolescents with ADHD.

Education about mental illness can help to make parents more aware of their child's condition, the symptoms and the pattern of the illness. Knowledge about ADHD and guidance how to recognise the symptoms help parents to support and train the child or adolescent in social and practical skills. Support in the form of a healthy lifestyle with sensible food, regular sleep and exercise also contributes to good health.

There are associations for people suffering from ADHD and for relatives. Information about these associations can be found at [www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/patientinfo](http://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/patientinfo).

Mental Health Services – Capital Region of Denmark has published a leaflet containing information about the role of relatives, the involvement of relatives in the treatment and the potential for help and support for relatives. Please feel free to contact the staff at the Mental Health Department for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry or find the leaflet at [www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/patientinfo](http://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/patientinfo).

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### **GOOD TIPS FOR RELATIVES**

- **Take the symptoms seriously**
  - **Familiarise yourself with what ADHD is, and learn the symptoms.**
  - **Help and support the child or adolescent in getting professional help.**
  - **Plan ‘ready-made’ activities that take the disorder and symptoms into consideration.**
  - **Provide comfort, e.g. by saying: "I can understand that you're impatient; It's really good that you have waited so long already".**
  - **Avoid reproaches – it is not easy for children or young people with ADHD to control their way of being and thinking.**
  - **Don't start off long discussions about why the child or adolescent has ADHD.**
  - **Seek help for yourself if you have questions, lack support or need assistance in your everyday life.**
  - **Remember that ADHD is not anyone's fault.**
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## FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.psykiatri-regionh.dk](http://www.psykiatri-regionh.dk)

You also have the opportunity to consult with PsykInfo for further information, advice and guidance on mental illness. PsykInfo is a psychiatric information centre in central Copenhagen. It is aimed at all citizens that need to know about mental illness.

See [www.psykinfo-regionh.dk](http://www.psykinfo-regionh.dk)





This booklet is for you who are a patient of Mental Health Services (Capital Region of Denmark) and your relatives. With this booklet, we want to help you and your relatives to experience a good and comprehensive treatment – and good co-operation with the Mental Health Services (Capital Region of Denmark) staff.

It is you and those closest to you who live with the illness and best know how you feel and how your illness affects your life.

We place great emphasis on keeping you well informed about the treatment throughout the process and you are always welcome to ask questions.

### **THE PATIENT AT THE CENTRE**

The treatment at the Mental Health Services (Capital Region of Denmark) often consists of a combination of therapies and is always based on the patient's individual and most acute needs. Therefore, no courses of treatment are the same.

The mental health staff has professional insight into how mental illnesses can develop and how they can be treated. We want to hear how you experience your illness and what your treatment goal is. We consider both when collaborating to plan the treatment.

The goal is for the treatment to heal you or make you significantly better. It varies when and to what extent people with mental illness recover. However, with the right treatment everyone can develop and create or re-create a daily routine.

### **REGION HOVEDSTADENS PSYKIATRI (MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES – CAPITAL REGION OF DENMARK)**

Many come into contact with a mental illness during their lifetime. At the Mental Health Services (Capital Region of Denmark), we treat approximately 41,000 children and adults for various illnesses every year. The treatment is provided both on an outpatient basis, by visiting teams and, where necessary, by inpatient admission.

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