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School Changes — Helping Children with ADHD

WHAT TO KNOW

- Many children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) struggle with school, whether school is in-person, at home, or through virtual classes.
- Children with ADHD may especially struggle when switching between school environments or to different schools entirely.
- Learn more about helping children with ADHD adjust to changes in school.



ADHD and Schools

Children with ADHD might experience more obstacles in their path to success than the average student.

Most children with ADHD receive some school services. This can mean special education services, such as individual or small group instruction with a special education teacher; or accommodations, such as changing how assignments, tasks, and tests are done, extra help with remembering and organizing work, and frequent communication. Together, teachers and parents can [help children with ADHD succeed in school](#)

A changing school environment

Many children experience more than one learning environment, for example, moving from one school to another as they age. In the COVID-19 pandemic, many children experienced changes in their learning environment, switching from in-person schooling to distance schooling, including learning at home and online. Many children returned to in-person schooling, but with more online learning as part of the school day. Some children continued with home or virtual-only schooling.

Strategies to help with school success

School can present challenges for many children with ADHD. Find out more about [strategies to help with school success](#) [PDF](#) [↗](#) in this toolkit developed for parents of children with ADHD.

Because ADHD symptoms include difficulty with [attention regulation, hyperactivity, and impulsivity](#), which can affect planning, organizing, and managing behavior, many children with ADHD struggle with change. Here are some of the challenges that children with ADHD can face in different learning environments:

- Physical activity and movement are important for all children, but especially so for children with ADHD. More time spent with virtual learning can mean sitting still without moving for longer periods of time. Finding time to move may be especially important for children who struggle with hyperactivity.
- Children with ADHD struggle more with boredom and putting mental effort into challenging tasks. Virtual learning or in-person school with

more rules may lack novelty and excitement. Teachers may need to find new ways to keep children with ADHD from being bored and keep them engaged in learning.

- Children with ADHD are more likely than their peers to have some difficulties with social relationships. If the school environment provides fewer opportunities to interact freely during the day, children may need other ways to practice social skills and build on relationships.
- Transitions can be challenging for children with ADHD; they may need extra help getting ready, and more time getting used to new settings.
- Having to spend time doing schoolwork, homework, and family activities in the same space where parents may also have to do their own work can create additional stress for students and parents.
- Children with ADHD are likely to have [other disorders in addition to ADHD](#), which can make coping with stress, change, and social isolation associated with virtual learning even more difficult. [They may need additional support](#).

With changes in how school is being conducted, there is also the possibility that children who have special needs are not getting the services they need. The U.S. Department of Education has issued information for [implementing special education services for schools that use distance learning](#). [PDF](#) [↗](#)

However, some children with ADHD may respond positively to some of the changes. For example, virtual learning may provide fewer distractions for children who find it more difficult to tune out other people around them. More structured classrooms with more distance between students might help some children focus. With fewer activities in their daily schedules, some children may have more time to get the sleep they need. Since each child may react differently to changes in their environment, parents, teachers, and students need support that works for each individual child.

Working to help parents, students, and teachers



The National Resource Center on ADHD (NRC), a program of Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), was esta...
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To help parents and students adapt to the changing environment, the [National Resource Center on ADHD](#) [↗](#) (NRC), a program of CHADD—Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and funded CDC partner, has worked to create [resources and support](#) [↗](#) for parents. These resources include advice for parents and teachers on:

- Creating enough structure so that the child can learn new routines
- Keeping the child engaged with learning
- Managing difficulty with attention while coping with changes
- Setting up the home learning environment
- Helping children stay connected with other children
- Keeping children healthy and active

Caring for a child with special needs can mean extra challenges. Parents of children with ADHD may experience extra stress from supporting

their child while coping with changes and may need additional help.

The NRC has created a [parent toolkit](#), [including information and resources to help parents understand more about ADHD and how to support their child](#), and [tips and advice that help parents with their own stress during uncertain times](#). [↗](#)

CDC also provides information and resources for parents [making decisions about schooling](#), [coping with their own stress](#), and [ensuring children well-being](#).

Schools are a part of ADHD treatment

To meet the needs of children with ADHD, schools can:

- Be part of effective treatment plans for children with ADHD
- Provide special education services or accommodations.

The American Academy of Pediatrics' [recommendations for ADHD treatment](#) state that school is a necessary part of any treatment plan. [Behavioral classroom management](#) focusing on positive responses is an evidence-based treatment for ADHD and can complement [parent training in behavior management](#).

The NRC also provides some tips for receiving treatment via when in-person treatment is not possible. Parents, teachers, healthcare providers, and older children and teens can collaborate to develop an approach that works best for each student.

Resources

National Resource Center on ADHD

- [Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(CHADD\)](#) [↗](#)
- [ADHD Toolkits for Parents and Educators](#) [↗](#)
- "Ask The Expert" Webinar: [Teaching Students How to "Work From Home" \(Sept. 9, 2020\)](#) [↗](#)
- "All Things ADHD" Podcast: [Online Learning for Children with ADHD \(Sept. 10, 2020\)](#) [↗](#)

U.S. Department of Education

- [Return to School Roadmap: Development and Implementation of Individualized Education Programs \(Sept. 30, 2021\) - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) [↗](#)

More information

- [About ADHD | CDC](#)
- [Children's Mental Health | CDC](#)

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities](#)