

Your Child and ADHD



Dear Parent or Guardian,

We (Community Care Behavioral Health Organization) have prepared this newsletter for you and your family. It includes information that we hope you find helpful. It is our goal to help families like you understand attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and the ways it can be treated. This newsletter provides important information about ways to help children with ADHD be more successful.

If you have any questions or need assistance in any way please do not hesitate to call the toll-free customer services number for your county listed in the table on the next page. A customer service representative is available to assist you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Para recibir esta información en español, por favor llame 1.866.229.3187.

With best regards,
Community Care



Community Care Customer Service Numbers

County	Customer Service
Adams	1.866.738.9849
Allegheny	1.800.553.7499
Bedford	1.866.483.2908
Berks	1.866.292.7886
Blair	1.855.520.9715
Bradford	1.866.878.6046
Cameron	1.866.878.6046
Carbon	1.866.473.5862
Centre	1.866.878.6046
Chester	1.866.622.4228
Clarion	1.866.878.6046
Clearfield	1.866.878.6046
Clinton	1.855.520.9787
Columbia	1.866.878.6046
Elk	1.866.878.6046
Erie	1.855.224.1777
Forest	1.866.878.6046
Huntingdon	1.866.878.6046
Jefferson	1.866.878.6046
Juniata	1.866.878.6046
Lackawanna	1.866.668.4696
Luzerne	1.866.668.4696

County	Customer Service
Lycoming	1.855.520.9787
McKean	1.866.878.6046
Mifflin	1.866.878.6046
Monroe	1.866.473.5862
Montour	1.866.878.6046
Northumberland	1.866.878.6046
Pike	1.866.473.5862
Potter	1.866.878.6046
Schuylkill	1.866.878.6046
Snyder	1.866.878.6046
Somerset	1.866.483.2908
Sullivan	1.866.878.6046
Susquehanna	1.866.668.4696
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Union	1.866.878.6046
Warren	1.866.878.6046
Wayne	1.866.878.6046
Wyoming	1.866.668.4696
York	1.866.542.0299
En español	1.866.229.3187
TTY/TDD (Dial 711): Request	1.833.545.9191



Understanding Your Child

Children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have trouble finishing tasks, focusing, and following instructions. They might feel frustrated, angry, or misunderstood. They can be hyperactive and impulsive. They may become afraid or depressed and have mood swings.

You can help your child change behaviors and be more productive and focused. Try to focus on things other than problems. Enjoy spending time together; having fun together makes it easier to solve problems together.

Children with ADHD do not act the same as other children their age. They are more easily distracted, frustrated, and afraid to fail. They might act silly or too young for their age. A child with ADHD may be hyperactive, but does not cause problems on purpose. You may think your child should know better and be tempted to scold him or her.

Tell your child you love him or her and want to help. Children with ADHD can be sensitive to jokes or comments. Let your child know that he or she is appreciated. Help your child understand rules and directions given by a teacher or other adults. Use your child's own words in explaining things.

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Do not get angry.
 - Be patient.
 - Try not to care about what people think.
 - Be proud of your child and the work you do together.
 - Find out what is hard for your child.
 - Watch how your child acts with others.
 - Learn about problem areas and situations that make it hard for your child to focus.
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Shape Your Child's Behavior

Use lists. If you give your child more than one thing to do, make a list. Write out the list with your child. Use his or her own words. Ask your child questions about the tasks. Explain tasks. Decide when a task should be finished. Have your child check off finished tasks. This gives your child a sense of accomplishment. Give your child choices, like when a task should be done. This gives your child practice in making decisions.

Understand consequences. Help your child think about the consequences of his or her actions. This helps your child take responsibility for his or her actions. Ask your child, "What do you think will happen if you do such-and-such?" You fill in the consequences if your child can not.

Reduce distractions. Create routines in your home. Keep yourself and your home on a schedule that your child can rely on. Prepare your child ahead of time for any changes in your home.

Reduce impulsive behavior. Set up activities that keep your child busy and active. For example, plan sports or activities with other children. This helps use your child's extra energy and reduces impulsive behavior. Your child can feel a sense of accomplishment when doing these things.

Organize. Children with ADHD often lose things. Set aside a place in your home where your child can put things that are needed every day, such as a backpack or keys. Always keep these items in this place. This prevents a last minute search for a missing item.

Set limits. Be consistent and fair when rewarding or disciplining your child. Plan ahead for behaviors you want to encourage or discourage. Encourage good behaviors. Discourage inappropriate behaviors. Explain which behaviors will be rewarded and which will be disciplined, along with the consequences for bad behaviors. Be sure you have your child's attention. Have your child repeat what you said in his or her own words. Be patient and clear. Write down the rules and post them in your home.

Reinforce good behavior. Be honest when praising your child. Do not give your child false praise. Praise your child for doing things well. Praise your child for showing effort. If a task is not finished or is done poorly, still tell your child you are glad for the effort. Giving rewards can encourage good behavior. Make a chart. Write the tasks you expect your child to do and the reward for each. Break large tasks into small steps. Leave a space for your child to mark off tasks that are finished. Explain the reward system. For example, "If you get 10 points, you can go to the movies."



Discipline Your Child

Children with ADHD do not always follow rules. You may need to discipline your child. Remember: The purpose of discipline is not to hurt your child. The purpose is to guide your child's behavior. Taking away privileges and using time-outs are good ways to change your child's behavior.

Decide ahead of time what discipline you will use to discourage inappropriate behaviors. Carry out the discipline even if it is not convenient. Be consistent. This is the only way your child will understand which behaviors are not allowed.

Do not get angry and instantly punish your child. Taking away privileges and using time-outs are good ways to change your child's behavior. "Time-outs" are periods of time that your child must spend alone, for example, in his or her room.

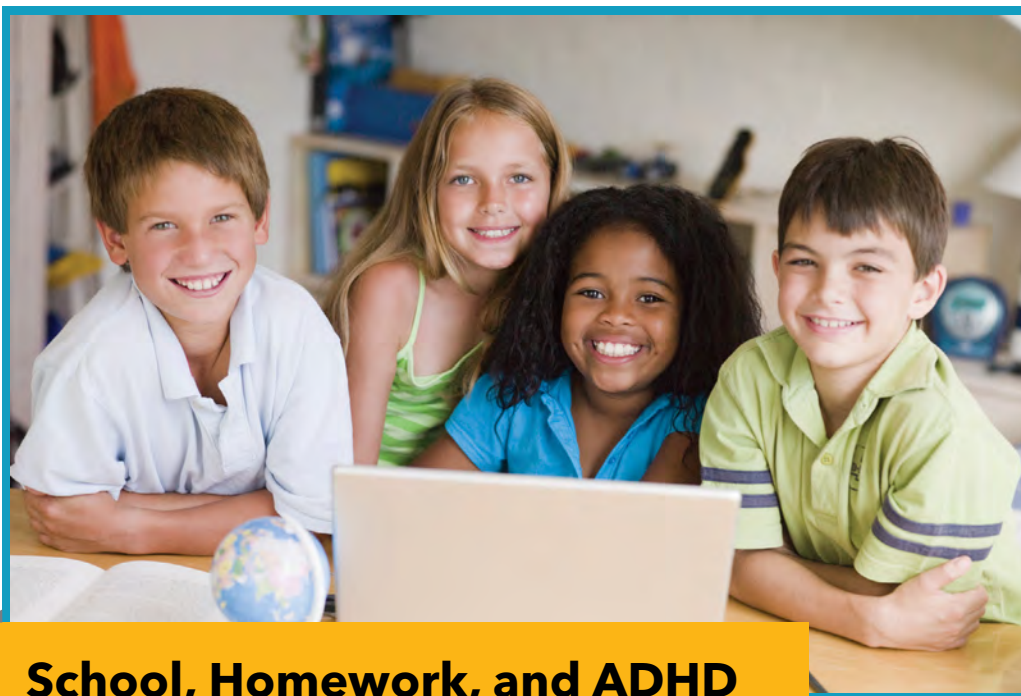
Use a time-out for only very bad behavior. Use time-outs whenever your child displays these bad behaviors. Decide how long the time-out will last. In general, time-outs can last from 3-10 minutes. Do not react to any temper tantrums your child may have during the time-out.

Dealing with Your Child's Anger and Rage

Talk with your child about what happened during the day. Ask your child to tell you about any worries or concerns. Talking with your child every day can stop feelings of frustration and anxiety from becoming angry outbursts.

If your child has an angry outburst, help him or her calm down. Make the area around your child calmer and quieter. Focus your child on exercise or another calming activity.

The purpose of discipline is to guide your child's behavior, not to hurt your child. Taking away privileges and using time-outs are good ways to change your child's behavior.



School, Homework, and ADHD

Children with ADHD often have problems at school and with homework. School is an important part of children's lives. There are ways you can help your child manage homework so that school is not as stressful.

Tell teachers about your child's ADHD. If your child is involved in activities outside of school, tell the instructors or coaches. All of them can better work with your child when they know about the ADHD. Talk to them about:

- **Medicines.** Tell teachers about any medicine your child is taking. Explain the side effects of the medicine. It is important for your child to stay on the medicine and to see his or her doctor on a regular basis. Let the teachers know if the medicine changes.
- **School, activity, and homework schedules.** Learn what your child needs to do for school. Ask your child's teachers for a list of activities and homework assignments each week. Find out what the teacher expects, how long the homework should take, and the due date. Meet with teachers regularly to learn how your child is doing. Discuss homework or behavior problems that happen at school. Let your child know what the teacher tells you.
- **Working with others.** Learn how your child acts with other children at school. Your child might have problems working or playing with other children. Talk with your child about these problems.

STARTING EARLY

These tips will help your child learn good study habits. You can try some of these things even before he or she has homework:

- Read with your child.
- Tell your child stories.
- Encourage your child to look up homework-related topics on the Internet.
- Talk about news stories with your child.
- Make trips to museums or the library.
- Limit watching television, playing video games, and using the phone.



Ways You Can Help with Homework

Find a good place for your child to work.

Find a quiet and calm work place for your child. Some children with ADHD work best in a place where an adult watches them, like at the kitchen table. Other children work better in a place set aside just for them, like a bedroom. Some children need complete quiet to concentrate. Other children find that a radio playing in the background helps them concentrate.

Never allow televisions, telephones, cell phones, or video games in the homework space. They can change your child's focus. Try different places and watch how your child works in each place. Notice how long it takes to finish homework and how well it is done in different places. Decide where your child works best. Make this your child's work place.

Organize your child's workspace. Make sure your child has enough books and worksheets. Help your child organize a box or desktop with all the things he or she needs to do homework. This helps decrease distractions.

Label a different folder for each subject, and help your child make sure schoolwork goes in the right folder. Keep finished homework assignments in a separate folder. Help your child put this folder in his or her backpack every evening. This way, homework will not be forgotten at home.

Plan homework assignments with your child.

Look at all of your child's assignments before starting. Plan with your child what homework needs to be done that evening. At first, you should keep track of all the assignments that need to be done. After a while, have your child do this alone. Do not forget tests or quizzes that your child needs to study for.

Never do your child's homework. This will not help. Children need to learn the consequences of forgetting or not planning their work.

Keep a weekly schedule and a daily schedule. Then you and your child can plan study time around other activities. Use a weekly schedule to plan for big assignments. Let your child decide the order for the evening's assignments. Number the list with the order he or she chooses.

Start with an easy assignment but do not keep the hardest assignments until the end. Hard assignments need the most focus. Your child may get restless or tired by the end. It is best to put hard assignments in the middle of the working time.

Plan breaks. Estimate how much time it will take to finish homework. Plan breaks at specific times or when an assignment is done. Use a fun activity during a break as a reward. Be sure to plan enough time for your child to finish all homework.



Schedule Time for Homework

Starting homework. Decide with your child what time homework should start. Give rewards for starting on time. Looking at past homework can help your child get started. Discuss the assignment and what is expected. This helps your child to focus.

Sit with your child for the first few minutes. Once your child starts to work, you can leave the room. Keep checking to see how your child is doing. Refocus your child's attention if he or she gets distracted or starts talking about other things. Stay until your child is busy again with the work. Remind your child of what needs to be finished. Encourage your child. Mention any reward that may be given when the homework is done.

If your child can not focus, switch to a different homework assignment or take a short break. If he or she has too much energy, a physical activity or sport during the break is a good idea.

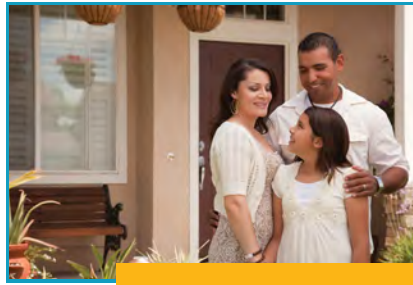
Teach your child to be responsible. Make your child responsible for small tasks. Have him or her write down homework assignments, bring home books, and start homework on time. Reward these behaviors. When your child is able to do these tasks, encourage him or her to do more. Bigger tasks include finishing homework without an adult watching and completing well-done homework on time. When planning a schedule for homework, talk about rewards. Give larger rewards for larger assignments or for jobs that need special focus.

Supervise homework. Talk about assignments with your child. If your child is worried about the assignment, listen to his or her fears. Help your child to solve problems and plan assignments. Encourage and reward your child.

At first, look over homework assignments to make sure they are complete. Later, encourage your child to look for mistakes. Look at homework together. If you see mistakes, do not point them out right away. Wait for your child to find them. Try to have him or her fix mistakes. For example, have your child look up a word in the dictionary instead of spelling it yourself. For older children, schedule time in their study plan to check and correct their own work.

When planning a homework schedule, talk about rewards. Give bigger rewards for larger assignments or for jobs that need special focus.

Break down all big assignments into small parts. Divide them over the week.



Care for Yourself and Your Child

Parents often feel frustration and stress when caring for a child with ADHD. This makes it even harder to care for the child. Stress comes from dealing with the symptoms of ADHD every day and can affect the whole family. Learning about different treatments helps reduce stress. It is also important to take care of your own needs. When you take care of yourself, you are better able to help your child.

It is easier to help your child when you understand the different treatments for ADHD. Many children with ADHD take medicines and often are on them for months or years. Your child must take medicine just as the doctor prescribes or the symptoms will come back. While your child is on medicine he or she should continue to see the doctor regularly. Talk to your child's doctor if you think your child is having side effects from medication. If you think your child is not getting better after starting medicine, talk to the doctor. Never stop your child's medicine without talking to your child's doctor.

Watch for these improvements after your child starts taking medicine:

- Changes in attention: better able to finish tasks and focus on schoolwork
- Changes in emotion: less frustrated and irritable, fewer temper tantrums
- Changes in hyperactivity: less fidgeting, able to play quietly, fewer impulsive behaviors

Medicine may help reduce your child's symptoms, but it does not solve all the problems of ADHD and it does not cure ADHD. Medicine will not change the way your child deals with other people, schoolwork problems, or low self-esteem. Therapy can help with these problems. Therapy can help your child act better and learn to deal with others better. Some kinds of therapy help your child and family talk about your child's emotional problems. Therapy may increase your child's self-esteem. Treatment will not work without your child's effort. Reward your child for trying to improve. Praise your child when he or she succeeds in acting better. This helps motivate your child to improve.

You may not be sure that your child should take medicine. You may hear about alternative treatments. Some of these do not work. Others are dangerous or unhealthy. Talk to your child's doctor if you do not think your child should take medicine or before treating your child in another way.

Parents who have children with ADHD may tell you about their successes with alternative treatments. Companies may tell you that an alternative treatment is a sure thing. There is no proof that alternative treatments like biofeedback, restricted diets, allergy treatments, megavitamins, yeast infection treatments, going to chiropractor visits, eye training, or using special colored glasses work for ADHD. Dietary supplements can have serious side effects.



Take Care of Yourself



ADHD is not just your child's problem. It affects the whole family. Sometimes you might feel frustrated and helpless. This causes tension in the family. Here are things you can do to make it easier to work with your child.

Do not blame yourself, family members, or your home environment for causing ADHD.

Scientists do not know the causes of ADHD. Do not blame yourself when things you do to help your child do not work. Be patient with yourself and your child.

Get involved early. Watch how your child behaves. Noticing a problem early makes it easier to solve. You will have less stress if you solve problems early.

Educate yourself. Learn about ADHD. Look at books and online to learn about new treatments that may help your child. This will help you feel more in control.

Practice asserting yourself. Be comfortable with being firm and asserting yourself. It will be easier to talk with your child. By being firm, you will be able to help your child take responsibility for his or her own actions.

Notice small successes. Feel good about yourself and your child. Do not demand perfection from yourself or your child. Do not be hard on yourself. Do not give up. When you want to solve a problem, start with small steps. Success comes in small steps. Enjoy small improvements. They give you and your child the strength to meet the next problem.

Make time for yourself. Take breaks when you feel stressed. Sit in a quiet place. Do something that makes you feel good about yourself. A break helps you cool down and rethink a problem.

Focus on the good things. Reward yourself for successes. Never give up hope. During difficult times, it helps to remember your successes. Think about the good experiences with your child.

Try to relax. Learn relaxation techniques to help you relax. Some of these are breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, and meditation. Ask your doctors or other health care providers about ways to relax. Books and the Internet also have information. Eat and exercise regularly. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, or other drugs. This helps you stay healthy and lessen your worry.

Build a support network. Find someone to talk to when you have a problem. This helps you decrease stress. Talk to your child's therapist, a social worker, a school counselor, or a pediatrician. Talk to family members about your frustrations and successes. Do not be afraid to ask for help.



ADHD Medicine Information

The most commonly used medicines to treat ADHD are called “stimulants.” Some of these medicines are: Ritalin, Concerta, Methylin (generic name: Methylphenidate), Adderall, Dexedrine, Dextrostat (generic name: Dextroamphetamine), and Focalin. Even though these medicines can have a stimulating or energizing effect on certain parts of the brain, the amounts of these medicines used to treat ADHD actually help to have a calming effect in children with ADHD. Nine out of 10 children get better on one of these medicines.

There is also a non-stimulant medicine known as Strattera (generic name: Atomoxetine) that is used to treat ADHD. Some children may do better on the stimulant medicine while other children may do better when taking Strattera.

Other types of medicine, including antidepressants, are sometimes used to treat ADHD. If one of the medicines listed above does not help, another should be tried. A medicine should be tried for at least 3-4 weeks, and the dose may need to be changed to see if it helps. If several medicine attempts fail, more than one medicine at once may be needed. Follow your doctor’s instructions. Your child should have a follow-up appointment with the doctor who prescribed the medicine within 30 days of starting the medicine.

Medicines used to treat ADHD have a calming effect. Some studies show that for some children, medicine and therapy together may work better than medicine alone.

Most doctors recommend that children taking medicine for ADHD also see a therapist.



Myths and Facts About ADHD Medication

Myth

Stimulants can lead to drug addiction when the child gets older.

Fact

Stimulants help many children focus and do better at school, home, and play. Not having bad experiences in these areas while a child is young may actually keep them from having addictions and other emotional problems when they are older.

Myth

Doing better while taking a stimulant medicine proves a child has ADHD.

Fact

Stimulants may help many children to focus and pay better attention, even if they do not have ADHD. The change may be easier to see in children with ADHD.

Myth

Medication should be stopped when the child becomes a teenager.

Fact

Not so! About 8 out of 10 children who needed medicine as a child still need it when they are older. Five out of 10 will need medicine as an adult.



Answers to Your Questions

Question: Do the medicines for ADHD have side effects?

Answer: All medicines can have side effects. However, the side effects from these medicines are hardly ever unsafe. The common side effects may include a loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, stomachache, headache, or a decrease in emotional expression. The loss of appetite seems to be the most common in children. To lessen side effects, talk to your child's doctor about using the lowest possible dose that still helps your child be less hyperactive. Give the medicine with food if it bothers your child's stomach.

Question: How should I take the medicine?

Answer: It is important to give the medicine to your child just the way the doctor says. Follow the doctor's advice even if you think the medicine may not be working. And if you think the medicine is not working, be sure to talk with your child's doctor.

Good times to take the medicine are at breakfast and lunch. The doctor may suggest a long-acting form of the medicine. The long-acting forms are taken only once a day, usually at breakfast. The medicine should not be crushed, broken, or chewed before taken.

Question: How long will the medication treatment last?

Answer: The length of time a child takes the medicine depends on the child. Everyone is different. Some children only need a short treatment period, maybe 1-2 years. For some children, treatment may last until they are a teenager, or even into adulthood. During this time, it is important for your child to take the medicine as prescribed by the doctor. Your child should have regular follow-up visits with his or her doctor or therapist to check progress. More than one person may be treating your child. It is helpful for them to be able to talk to one another. It is a good idea to sign a consent form to allow your child's doctors and therapists to talk to one another.

It is normal for parents to be worried about whether taking medicine is the best thing for their child. You need to understand the benefits and risks of taking medicine. Your child's doctor can give you advice and answer all the questions you may have about medicines used to treat ADHD.



ADHD and Anxiety

Sometimes a mental health condition, like ADHD, can occur with other problems. For example, it is common for someone with ADHD to struggle with other mental health conditions such as anxiety. According to the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, almost 50% of people with ADHD also have anxiety issues. We are providing you with an anxiety screening tool for your information.

Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders: Parent Version

Directions: Below is a list of statements that describes how people feel. Read each statement carefully and decide if it is "Not true or hardly ever true," "Somewhat or sometimes true," or "Very true or often true" for your child. Then for each statement, circle the number that corresponds to the response that seems to describe your child for the last 3 months. Please respond to all statements as well as you can, even if some do not seem to concern your child.

	Not true or hardly ever true	Somewhat true or sometimes true	Very true or often true
My child is shy.	0	1	2
People tell me that my child worries too much.	0	1	2
My child is scared to go to school.	0	1	2
My child gets really frightened for no reason at all	0	1	2
My child is afraid to be alone in the house.	0	1	2

A score of three or more might be reason to consider further evaluation. If you are concerned that your child is having issues with anxiety, you can share these answers with your child’s PCP (doctor) or behavioral health practitioner. You can also call Community Care and ask to speak with a care manager if you would like to discuss this further.

References
 ADHD Medicines. American Academy of Family Physicians 2000-2002. <http://www.familydoctor.org> | Kutscher, M. MD, Wolff, R. MD (2002). *The ADHD e-book: Living as if there is no tomorrow*. Pediatric Neurological Associates, White Plains, NY. <http://www.pediatricneurology.com/adhd.htm> | Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. 1998-2008. <http://www.mayoclinic.com> | Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. National Institute of Mental Health. NIH Publication No. 96-3572, 1994. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/> | Developed by Boris Birmaher, MD, Suneeta Khetarpal, MD, Marlane Cully, MEd, David Brent, MD, and Sandra McKenzie, PhD, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, University of Pittsburgh (October, 1995).



Resources for You and Your Family

Books for Children with ADHD

Sometimes I Drive My Mom Crazy, but I Know She's Crazy About Me: A Self-Esteem Book for ADHD Children, by L.E. Shapiro and M.S. Hennie, 1993. Published by Childsworld/Childsplay.

Putting on the Brakes: A Child's Guide to Understanding and Gaining Control over ADHD, by Patricia Quinn, 1991. Published by Magination Press. (Ages 4-7)

Otto Learns About His Medicine: A Story About Medication for Children with ADHD, by M. Galvin, 1995. Published by Magination Press. (Ages 4-8)

The Hyperactive Turtle, by D.M. Moss, 1990. Published by Woodbine House. (Ages 5-8)

Help is on the Way: A Child's Book about ADD, by M.A. Nemiroff and J. Annunziata, 1998. Published by Magination Press. (Ages 5-9)

Putting on the Brakes: Young People's Guide to Understanding ADHD, by Patricia Quinn and Judith Stern, 1991. Published by Magination Press. (Ages 9-12)

Adolescents and ADD: Gaining the Advantage, by Patricia Quinn, 1995. Published by Magination Press. (Ages 11-14)

Books for Siblings of Children with ADHD

Living with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs: A Book for Sibs, by D. Meyer, P. Vadasy, and R. Fewell, 1985. Published by University of Washington Press.

I'm Somebody Too, by Jeanne Gehret, 1992. Published by Verbal Images Press.

My Brother's a World Class Pain: A Sibling's Guide to ADHD/Hyperactivity, by M. Gordon, 1992. Published by GSI Publications. (Ages 6-13)

Online Resources

National Attention Deficit Disorder Association
www.add.org

Children & Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders
www.chadd.org

National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov



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