
THE WELLNESS LETTER

Your Child and AD/HD

School and Homework

Children with AD/HD often have problems at school and with homework. Since school is such an important part of children's lives, this newsletter focuses on some of the problems your child may have at school and with homework.

Communicate with Teachers

It is important to tell your child's teachers about the AD/HD. Your child's teachers spend a large amount of time with your child. Once the teachers know about the AD/HD, they can better help your child. If your child is involved in organized activities outside of school, the instructors or coaches of those activities should also be told. Making teachers and other instructors aware of the special needs your child has will help them to better understand and work with your child. Talk with them about:

Medications

Make sure that your child's teachers know of any medication your child is taking. Explain the side effects of the medication. Be sure to let the school know of any changes in medication.

School activity and homework schedules

Be aware of what your child is expected to do for school. The more aware you are, the better you are able to make up a reward system that:

- Encourages appropriate behaviors in the classroom.
- Encourages well-done homework.
- Encourages your child.

Ask your child's teachers for a list of activities and homework assignments each week. Be sure that the list includes the teacher's expectations,

the teacher's estimate of the amount of time that the homework will take, and the due date.

Children with AD/HD may have trouble remembering different sets of rules and reward systems. Ask teachers about the rules and rewards that they use in school. Try to set up rules and rewards at home that are similar to the rules and rewards at school. Meet regularly with teachers to talk about progress and to discuss homework problems or behavior problems in the classroom. Be sure to talk with your child about his or her classroom behavior and homework problems.

Your child's ability to work with others

At school, children with AD/HD should be encouraged to work on projects with children who don't have AD/HD. These children can set examples of appropriate behavior for your child. Children with AD/HD should not be excluded from classroom activities. Your child might have problems when working with other children. Learn how your child acts with other children at school. Then talk with your child about any problems. This can help prevent low self-esteem in your child.

Help Your Child Learn Skills Early

When you have a schedule of homework assignments and due dates, you will be able to regulate your child's work. You will also be able to create a learning environment.

Your child can begin learning good academic skills even if he or she doesn't have homework. You can guess at some of the future skills your child will need—reading for longer periods of time, looking up books at the library, or working alone, for example.

You can:

- Read with your child or tell him or her stories.
- Encourage your child to use an encyclopedia or look up things on the internet.
- Talk about news stories with your child.
- Go to museums or the library.
- Limit television watching.
- Provide a quiet space where your child can work.

Many of the skills your child will need for schoolwork can be learned through daily activities such as these. These activities encourage curiosity, concentration, and focus.

Managing Homework

Find a good place for your child to work

For children with AD/HD, it is especially important to reduce distractions. Some children, however, may work best in a central place where they can be monitored by an adult. This might be the living room or kitchen table. Even in a central place, the area should be quiet and relatively free from any distractions. Other children may work better in a place set aside just for them, like a bedroom or study. Here they can control the level of background stimulation, finding what works best for them.

For some children, absolute silence is necessary to concentrate. Other children may find that a radio playing in the background helps them concentrate by tuning out other distractions. Televisions and telephones, which can easily change a child's focus, should be removed from the child's study area.

If you are not sure about where your child works best, try a few different places. Watch how your child reacts to the different places. Notice the time it takes to finish the homework in the differ-

ent places. Also compare the quality of the homework.

Make sure that your child is organized

Make sure that your child is organized before he or she begins homework. Make sure your child has all the books and worksheets he or she needs. This will make distractions less likely. Organize a box or desktop with all the things your child may need to do homework: pens, paper, scissors, glue, tape, and so forth.

To help you and your child keep track of homework, you may want to keep folders for each subject your child is taking in school. In these folders, you can collect work that has been returned by the teacher to help your child watch his or her performance, and to prepare for future tests and projects.

Finished homework assignments should be kept in a separate folder. This folder should be put in the child's backpack every evening. This will make sure that no homework will be forgotten at home.

In your child's workspace, keep a separate box for school-related materials like permission slips. Having a separate box will help remind your child to give these to you.

Structure homework assignments with your child

Before your child begins homework, look at all the assignments that need to be done. You and your child should plan what needs to be done that evening. At first you may need to keep track of your child's work completion. As he or she gets used to doing this, encourage your child to do it by him or herself. Write up a list of all the assignments that need to be completed. Keep in mind

any longer assignments that your child will need to complete, as well as tests or quizzes that your child will need to study for. These, and any other big assignments, should be broken down into small parts and divided over the week. Be sure to schedule times for these small parts.

It may be helpful to keep a weekly schedule and a daily schedule. This allows you and your child to plan study time around other activities (like after-school sports or scouting activities). A weekly schedule will also be helpful in planning for long-term assignments.

Let your child decide the order for doing the evening's assignments. Number the list with the order your child decides on. Because your child may have trouble concentrating at first, an easier assignment may help ease him or her into work. However, hard assignments should usually not be kept until the end. They need the most concentration, and children can get fidgety or tired at the end of their work. It may be best to plan these for the middle of the working time.

Plan breaks to motivate

Estimate how much time it will take to complete the work and then plan several breaks. Breaks can be at specific times or they can be taken when an assignment is finished. Allowing fun activities during breaks can be part of a reward system. Make sure you have allowed enough time for your child to complete all homework with the breaks.

Starting homework

It may be difficult to get your child to begin studying. Looking at past homework may help ease your child into doing his or her homework. Have your child decide when to start doing homework. Reward your child if he or she gets to work

within a few minutes of the agreed time.

Sit with your child for the first few minutes until he or she has gotten involved with the work. Refocus his or her attention if he or she becomes distracted or starts talking about other things. Remind your child of what needs to get done. Be encouraging. Mention any reward he or she may get when the homework is finished.

For homework that requires brainstorming, active problem solving, reading, or writing, it may be helpful to participate with your child as he or she begins the assignment. This will help your child to focus. Once your child has begun to work, leave but continue to check in on him or her. If your child becomes distracted, sit with him or her again.

If your child cannot get focused, switch to a different homework assignment or take a short break. If your child has too much energy, try to have him or her do something active during the break.

Reinforcing homework

From the very beginning, make your child responsible for small tasks. Small tasks include writing down homework assignments at school, bringing home all books needed, and getting homework started on time. Give rewards for doing these. As your child is able to do these tasks, give rewards for more complex activities such as:

- Finishing homework without an adult watching.
- Finishing quality homework within a specified time.
- Proofreading or checking homework.
- Solving problems creatively.

While planning assignments, be sure to discuss rewards. Whether using a point system or simply a list of rewards, try to match rewards with the amount of effort required. Larger rewards should be given for larger assignments or for jobs requiring particular focus and problem solving.

Supervising homework

Your role as supervisor should include discussing assignments with your child. Listen to your child's fears or concerns about the difficulty of the assignment. Help your child to brainstorm and solve problems. Help your child plan the assignment—and don't forget to encourage and reward.

In the beginning, you should look over homework assignments to make sure they are complete. Later, encourage your child to review his or her own work. Looking at the homework together can help with this. Notice any errors but don't point them out to your child. Instead, wait for your child to find them. Also, try to have your child correct his or her own errors (for example, have your child look up a word in the dictionary instead of spelling it for him or her). Older children should have time scheduled in their study plan to proofread and correct their work.

When you work with your child, you are acting as a role model. When sitting with your child, watching him or her, reading or doing your own work, you can model good study skills.

Finally, do not do your child's homework for him or her. Children need to learn the negative consequences of forgetting or poorly planning their work. With your involvement in the weekly and daily planning of homework, this will be less likely to occur.

Accessing Your Behavioral Health Benefits

Please call the number on the back of your insurance card for questions about benefits, obtaining referrals to treatment, and other behavioral health issues.

Contact Us

If you do not want to receive these newsletters, please call or write to us at the number or address listed below:

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