

ADHD in the Teen Years

A guide for parents navigating adolescence with insight and support

Why This Stage Matters

The teen years are a time of rapid growth—socially, emotionally, and neurologically. For teens with ADHD, this stage can be particularly overwhelming. Hormonal changes, academic demands, increased independence, and emotional fluctuations often amplify ADHD symptoms.

This handout is here to help you understand what to expect and how to support your teen through these years with empathy, structure, and encouragement.

What ADHD Might Look Like in Teens

ADHD in adolescence doesn't always look like hyperactivity or fidgeting—it often shows up in subtler ways, like:

- Difficulty managing time or completing tasks.
- Emotional outbursts or sensitivity.
- Struggles with motivation and organization.
- Trouble following through on responsibilities.
- Sleep issues or trouble waking up.
- Risk-taking behavior or impulsivity.

Teens may also experience low self-esteem or feel “different” from their peers. Many begin internalizing their struggles, which is why emotional support is key during this stage.

How You Can Help

Listen Without Judgment

Let your teen talk freely. Acknowledge their frustration, even if you don't have immediate solutions.

Provide Executive Function Support

Use tools like planners, alarms, checklists, and color-coded systems. Break tasks into smaller, manageable chunks.

Prioritize Sleep and Routines

Sleep affects everything, focus, mood, and memory. Help your teen create a consistent bedtime routine (yes, even now!).

Work With Teachers and the School

Request accommodations through an IEP or 504 Plan if needed. Stay in touch with educators about your teen's learning profile.

Normalize Therapy or Coaching

Support from a therapist or ADHD coach can give teens coping strategies and a safe space to work through challenges.

Celebrate Effort, Not Just Results

Teens with ADHD often try harder than we realize. Validate progress, resilience, and small wins.

What to Watch For

Teens with ADHD are at increased risk for co-occurring conditions like:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Oppositional behavior
- Risky behaviors (substance use, unsafe driving)

Early intervention and consistent support can make a big difference. If you're concerned, reach out to your care team, we're here for you.

Need More Support?

Reach out to our team at The Kids Care Clinic or at SHARPE Minds ADHD Clinic for therapy referrals, coaching services, or school support planning.

A Note from Our Clinic

Your teen is not “lazy,” “careless,” or “unmotivated.” Their brain just works differently and that difference comes with both challenges and incredible potential. These years aren't about “fixing” your teen. They're about equipping them with the tools, understanding, and support they need to thrive.