



# David E. Simai M.D.

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## Board Certified Pediatrician

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## ADHD Interventions for Parents

### **Diet and Nutrition**

All children benefit from fresh foods and regular meal times; it's best for all kids to stay away from junk food and soda. These tenets are especially true for children with ADD/ADHD, whose impulsiveness and distractedness can easily lead to missed meals, disordered eating, overeating and obesity. Specific foods probably don't cause ADD/ADHD, but some researchers have claimed there's a connection between chemicals found in many foods, including artificial colors and other additives, and the severity of ADD/ADHD symptoms. However, common sense and discipline, rather than special foods or restrictive diets, are what's most important.

### **Create a Simple List of Rules**

Focus on the most important behaviors by creating a short and straight-forward list of rules. Let the small stuff slide. If your child completes their homework and chores but forgets a dirty dish, focus on the accomplishments rather than the mistake. Perfection is an unrealistic expectation.

### **Use Praise**

Praise your child for simple good behaviors that you would like them to continue. A simple "good job" or a smile can go a long way. If you're finding it hard to find behavior to praise, compliment your child for extended periods where they do not get into trouble.

### **Create a Reward System**

Rewards are more effective than punishments to motivate a child to change their behavior. Reward systems can be as simple as a token for each day of the week a specific good behavior is completed, which can then be exchanged for a reward. Talk with your child to figure out what reward they want, and how many tokens it will cost.

### **Homework Hour**

Set aside a time each school day for your child to complete homework. If there are no assignments for that evening, they can still spend the time studying or reading. This routine reduces the chance that your child will forget or avoid their homework. Additionally, homework hour reduces the reinforcement that children usually receive for completing their homework as quickly as possible.



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### Establish Structure

Children with ADHD do their best when they know what to expect. Establish a routine for homework, meals, playing, bedtime, and preparing for school. For example, your child may learn to brush their teeth at a specified time, get a glass of water, and then lay out their clothes for the next day. You can use a reward system to begin establishing these routines.

### Use Consequences Effectively

Consequences should be explained in advance, they should occur immediately after the unwanted behavior, and you must always follow through with your stated consequence. Timeout and the removal of privileges are effective. Be careful not to over punish—your child will not remember why they are grounded after 2 weeks, and you have no leverage if your child has nothing.

### Strategies for Maintaining Structure

Establish predictable routines for morning and evening. You should keep your child busy with scheduled and supervised activities, but don't pile on so many that the child is overwhelmed. **Insufficient sleep makes attention problems worse, so insist that your child have a regular bedtime and enough rest.** Make sure your child has a quiet, private space of his or her own, even if it is just a table with a blanket thrown over it. **Plan ahead** to make sure your child doesn't become overtired or hungry during outings; review rules on behavior beforehand.

### "Green Time"

Researchers have found that children with ADD/ADHD benefit from spending time in nature. Kids experience a greater reduction of ADHD symptoms when they play in a park full of grass and trees than on a concrete playground. Parents may want to take note of this promising approach to managing ADHD. Even in cities, most families have access to parks and other natural settings. And when parents join their children in "green time," they also get a much-needed breath of fresh air for themselves.

**For more information:** <C:\Users\Manager\Desktop\Parenting a Child with ADD.pdf>

Information adapted from [www.TherapistAid.com](http://www.TherapistAid.com)