

Tips for coping with ADHD as an adult

ADHD symptoms vary from one individual to the next. For most adult patients, hyperactivity is not the most important symptom. Many adults with ADHD have difficulty paying attention even when it matters – like at work or during a discussion with their spouse – and feel that they simply cannot get organized.

Here, we provide you with some tips on how you can organize your day and surroundings at home and at work.

At home

These tips can help you keep up with things at home:

- **Box it:** If you have rooms full of “stuff,” get three large boxes. Label them “Use All the Time,” “Sometimes Use,” and “Haven’t Used in Ages.” Separate objects in the room into their respective box. Throw away the “Haven’t Used in Ages” box.
- **A place for your keys:** A key rack with labelled hooks in the hallway is a useful tool. Otherwise you’re always trying to remember where you dropped your keys!
- **Make a list:** Use day planners and “to do” lists so you can stay on track with jobs that need to be completed around the house.

- **Mark it in your calendar:** A calendar with a large box for each day will allow you to note down appointments, social arrangements and things which need to be done by a certain date. But beware, calendars aren’t for everybody; you have to remember to fill it in.
- **Break it down:** Larger jobs, which may seem overwhelming, are far easier to tackle if you break them down into smaller steps.
- **Post it:** Colour-coded sticky notes are great memory joggers for important “to-do” tasks. Appointments could be on yellow notes, phone call reminders on pink, bills to pay on green and so on.

At work

Various things can help you stay organized at work. You might find some of the following tips helpful:

- **Make it your own:** Set up your work area in the way that best suits you in terms of light, music and privacy.
- **Keep it within reach:** Have everything you need on hand, so you don't get distracted while trying to find the stapler, for example.
- **Time it:** Daily time sheets can help structure your day. Set an alarm or computer alert so you know when time is almost up for a task.
- **Box it:** "In" and "out" trays are useful. If you have space, use four trays: three "in" trays respectively labelled "Important/Now," "Important/Soon" and "Maybe Important," and one "out" tray marked "Pending" or "Already Done/Waiting for Response."

- **Post it:** If you work in a place where there are numerous interruptions, keep a stack of self-adhesive tags or sticky notes. When interrupted, immediately write down what you were doing.
- **Break it down:** If you're faced with a large or less interesting task, do it in small chunks, interrupted by an alternative activity: this will give you some release from the task.



Tips for bedtime, for ADHD patients of all ages

Problems with sleep are common among people with ADHD, and more common than in the general population. Although sleep problems can take on many forms, the most common one seen in people with ADHD is that they have difficulty falling asleep at a time when they should be feeling sleepy. This “delayed sleep phase” makes them go to bed later and want to sleep longer in the morning. In addition, some people may find that their ADHD medication makes it even more difficult for them to fall asleep.

There are strategies you can use to improve your or your child’s sleep:

- **Routine:** Maintain a consistent time for going to bed and waking in the morning.
- **Environment:** Limit use of the bed to sleeping; the bed should not be used as a place to watch television, eat or do work or homework.
- **Preparation:** Activities that provide active mental stimulation before bedtime, such as reading, can help you or your child become mentally fatigued.

- **Avoidance:** Although physical activity is healthy, it should be avoided within 2 hours of bedtime. Activities that provide passive mental stimulation, such as watching television or playing on a computer, should also be avoided before bedtime.
- **Timing of medication:** Taking ADHD medication as early as possible in the morning may help avoid possible problems at bedtime.

