

# **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) Chapter (II)**

## **Treatment and Support (Part 1)**

To help children and adolescents with AD/HD, we need to adopt a diversified approach which mainly includes medical treatment and psycho-education. In this chapter, medical treatment and proper behavioural management as a kind of psycho-education will be introduced.

Education Bureau  
2022

### **Medical Treatment**

#### **Medication**

Medication is one of the most common treatments for AD/HD. Medication can help improve the imbalance of Dopamine and Norepinephrine of the neurotransmitters in the brain of people with AD/HD, so as to help improve the brain's control over attention, activity level and impulsive behaviours.

At present, there are two main types of medication which are commonly used for AD/HD in Hong Kong: stimulant drug and non-stimulant drug. There are short-acting stimulant drug (lasting 3-4 hours) and long-acting stimulant drug (lasting 12 hours).

Some researches on medication indicate that around 65-80% children with AD/HD is responsive to the use of stimulant drug, e.g., reduced activity level, reduced disruptive and impulsive behaviours and increased attention span, while non-stimulant drug is usually used on children who do not respond to stimulant drug or have serious side effects.

Side effects of taking stimulant drug may include loss of appetite, gastrointestinal upset, headache, etc., especially in the early stage of medication. Due to the different needs and conditions of each child with AD/HD, the medication they need is different, including the type, dosage and number of doses and their response to medication. If parents have any question about their children's medication, they should consult their

doctors as soon as possible. It may not be appropriate for parents to adjust the dosage of medication or decide to stop taking medication for their children by themselves.

To have a further understanding of medication, parents may refer to the educational materials of the Institute of Mental Health of Castle Peak Hospital:

*Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)*

[https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/mhi/article\\_02\\_01\\_01.asp](https://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/imh/mhi/article_02_01_01.asp)

## **Psycho-education**

Psycho-education is an educational practice that uses psychological science to promote children's and adolescents' psychological development and adaptation, supporting children's behavioural, cognitive, emotional and learning needs.

Parents are also able to provide psycho-education to their children to help them in managing their behaviours properly, changing their mindset and enhancing their executive skills.

In this chapter, methods for proper behavioural management will be introduced, while methods for changing mindset and enhancing executive skills will be introduced in the next chapter "Treatment and Support (Part 2)".

### **Proper Behavioural Management**

Behavioural management focuses on giving positive or negative consequences to increase children's appropriate behaviours or reduce their inappropriate behaviours. When managing children's behaviours, parents should pay attention to the following key points:

#### **1. Choose appropriate and achievable target behaviours:**

Focus on improving one or two behaviours of your child at a time to avoid setting too many goals simultaneously. For example, setting up four target behaviours for your child at a time is likely to be overwhelming for him/her. An example is "concentrate on doing homework every day, go to bed before 10:30 p.m., practice the piano for an hour every day, pack the schoolbag by yourself". This example is unlikely to achieve good results. In addition, easy and achievable behavioural goals may be set at the beginning, so as to let your child have a sense of achievement.

## 2. Define the target behaviours to achieve:

The target behaviours to achieve must be concise, specific and measurable, so that your child knows clearly what he/she can do, what he/she cannot do and how to do it. For example, the target “to do homework properly”, “properly” is not a specific and measurable standard. It will be clearer to define the target as “to finish homework in an hour”. You can refer to the following examples:

	✓	✗
1	To revise 10 new English words in half an hour and finish the dictation task	To revise in a good way
2	To surf the internet one hour per day at most	Don't surf the Internet frequently
3	To replace books to the shelf after reading	To tidy up things properly

## 3. Use together with Appropriate Reward Plans:

You may consider using the token system or the scoring system in your reward plan, and discuss with your child in advance the reward that can be exchanged with a certain number of tokens or scores. The way to reward, feasibility and frequency of rewards should be considered while devising a reward plan. The rewards may not necessarily be material rewards. Positive verbal feedback, for example, “I appreciate you going to bed on time”, or allowing your child to engage in activities they like, such as playing games with him/her, taking him/her to the park or watching movies with him/her, skating, etc. are also good ways to reward a child's behaviours.

## 4. Review the effectiveness of the plan:

At the beginning of the plan, you should immediately give feedback to your child's performance to strengthen target behaviours. When the child can continue to maintain those target behaviours, you can gradually reduce the frequency of feedback and encourage him/her to make self-evaluation or reward.

If you are interested in the content of this chapter, you may refer to the information about supporting students with AD/HD at the Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online of the Education Bureau for further information:

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder/index.html>