



## NASET ADHD SERIES

### Part # 10 - Teenagers with ADHD

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#### Introduction

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Although hyperactivity tends to decrease as a child ages, teens who continue to be hyperactive may feel restless and try to do too many things at once. They may choose tasks or activities that have a quick payoff, rather than those that take more effort, but provide bigger, delayed rewards. Teens with primarily attention deficits struggle with school and other activities in which they are expected to be more self-reliant.

Teens also become more responsible for their health decisions. When a child with ADHD is young, parents are more likely to be responsible for ensuring that their child maintains treatment. But when the child reaches adolescence, parents have less control, and those with ADHD may have difficulty sticking with treatment.

To help them stay healthy and provide needed structure, teens with ADHD should be given rules that are clear and easy to understand. Helping them stay focused and organized—such as posting a chart listing household chores and responsibilities with spaces to check off completed items—also may help.

Teens with or without ADHD want to be independent and try new things, and sometimes they will break rules. If your teen breaks rules, your response should be as calm and matter-of-fact as possible. Punishment should be used only rarely. Teens with ADHD often have trouble controlling their impulsivity and tempers can flare. Sometimes, a short time-out can be calming.

If a teen asks a parent for later curfews and use of the car, the parent should listen to the request, give reasons for his/her opinions, and listen to his/her child's opinion. Rules should be clear once they are set, but communication, negotiation, and compromise are helpful along the way. Maintaining treatments, such as medication and behavioral or family therapy, also can help with managing a teenager's ADHD.

Although many teens engage in risky behaviors, those with ADHD, especially untreated ADHD, are more likely to take more risks. In fact, in their first few years of driving, teens with ADHD are involved in nearly four times as many car accidents as those who do not have ADHD. They are also more likely to cause injury in accidents, and they get three times as many speeding tickets as their peers.

Most states now use a graduated licensing system, in which young drivers, both with and without ADHD, learn about progressively more challenging driving situations. The licensing system consists of three stages—learner's permit, during which a licensed adult must always be in the car with the driving teen; intermediate (provisional) license; and full licensure. Parents should make sure that their teens, especially those with ADHD, understand and follow the rules of the road. Repeated driving practice under adult supervision is especially important for teens with ADHD.

## **References**

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