

## Five Tips for Helping Kids with ADHD During the Coronavirus Outbreak

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These are unprecedented times for which we have no research that seems directly applicable. However, there are many strategies for children with ADHD that are highly effective in “typical times,” and are perhaps even more pertinent now. Here are five useful tips for helping kids with ADHD cope during the coronavirus pandemic.

1. Make time to move. Physical exercise, or just activity in general, is known to help temporarily reduce and manage symptoms of ADHD. Try to get outside and move every day, and incorporate short “exercise breaks” throughout the day—20 jumping jacks, 10 pushups, running 5 laps around the outside of the house, or a quick dance party in the living room.
2. Alternate “highs” and “lows.” Research shows that by alternating “low” and “high” appeal activities, children with ADHD do better at more tedious tasks. Instead of trying to do virtual lessons and school work all in one prolonged episode, break them up with activities your kid truly enjoys—build a fort, bake cookies, go on a scavenger hunt outside, play a favorite game.
3. Avoid burnout. In two parent families, alternate direct supervision of your child so each parent gets a break every day. Play to your strengths. Does one of you have more energy and patience in the mornings? Is one of you an art lover, and the other better at teaching math? If one parent is the constant caregiver, they are much more likely to reach their limit with stress and fatigue. In single parent families, carve out time for yourself whenever you can. Perhaps a grandparent or trusted friend can “babysit” over FaceTime or Zoom while you take a self-care break.
4. Be consistent about medication. Children taking medication for ADHD should continue to use it, even though many schools have cancelled attendance for the rest of the academic year. These medications are as useful for improving ADHD and reducing risks outside of school just as much as in the (physical) classroom.
5. Use home reward programs. If a task or activity is fun (like a video game) kids will stick with it because it contains its own reward. If a task is not fun (like school work), it’s much harder for them to persist. External rewards are a useful tool for sustaining motivation. Set up a token system with fun “prizes”—ice cream, special time with mom or dad, or let your child choose their own reward.