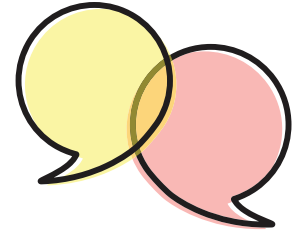



Meals and Children's Individual Needs

To address some children's specific meal-related needs, parents and staff need to work together to find a solution that meets those needs. It is important to create a calm, pleasant environment at mealtimes so that all children can concentrate on their food and their hunger and satiety signals (see the sheet "A Pleasant Mealtime Environment"). This is even more crucial for children who are easily distracted, such as those with attention deficit disorder, with or without hyperactivity (ADHD).



Sometimes it is difficult for a child with ADHD to remain seated at the table, talk softly or stop wiggling. They may eat very quickly or, if bothered by noise, space out and take longer to eat. Here are a few tips to help these children and create a mealtime environment for them:

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- ▶ Put children with ADHD into a **calm** group.
 - ▶ Clearly explain the **directions** for lunchtime and break them down into simple steps, if necessary. Ask them to repeat the instructions back to you to make sure they have understood.
 - ▶ Make sure to **explain** the consequences of not following directions.
 - ▶ Make sure to **assign them** one task at a time.
 - ▶ Say their **first name** before speaking to them or touching their shoulder to get their attention.
 - ▶ **Praise them** when they are well behaved to help them develop self-esteem.

Children on medication

Children who take medication for a particular condition can experience changes in their appetite.

- ▶ If you are worried about how much a child is eating, speak about it with their parents to get an overview of their eating habits.
- ▶ Remember to take the same approach with these children as you would any other children—do not force them to eat if they aren't hungry.



Children are better at gauging their own appetite and deciding how much they eat. So that they don't feel discouraged with the amount of food in front of them, encourage them to take smaller portions and remind them that they do not have to eat it all.



Loss of appetite is one of the potential side effects of many medications, including ADHD treatment. Children generally aren't very hungry at lunch time, when their medication is strong in their systems. They might eat more in the morning before taking their medication and in the evening when their medication has less effect on their appetite. Educators and teachers can work together to make sure that children with ADHD who are frequently or impulsively hungry have nutritious snacks available to them several times a day.

Lunch box

Children who take medication may bring different food to school than other children, as their medications can reduce their appetite. Some parents will give their children dietary supplements or meal substitutes, such as protein-rich or high-calorie beverages, if they aren't hungry for lunch. (e.g., Boost®, Carnation® Instant Breakfast, Ensure®, PediaSure® and PediaSure Complete®). Other children will only bring snacks. Some children might find it strange if a child only has a drink or snack for lunch. If this occurs, advise the child to explain why their lunch is different.



In addition to a loss of appetite, medication can cause sleep problems, head and stomach aches, mood swings, tics, drowsiness, nausea and indigestion. Talk to the school nurse to get a better understanding of the child's situation and behaviours.

More about ADHD

Children with attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity (ADHD) have trouble concentrating and controlling their behaviour. This disorder can have an effect on their self-esteem and make it difficult for them to function in family, social, professional and school settings.

It is a neurological disorder with a hereditary component that can be caused by a lack of certain chemical substances in the brain.

There is no known cure for ADHD. Rather, treatment focuses on reducing its effects on children. This includes psychological and social support, specialized support and sometimes medication to improve concentration, especially for children who have trouble with school.