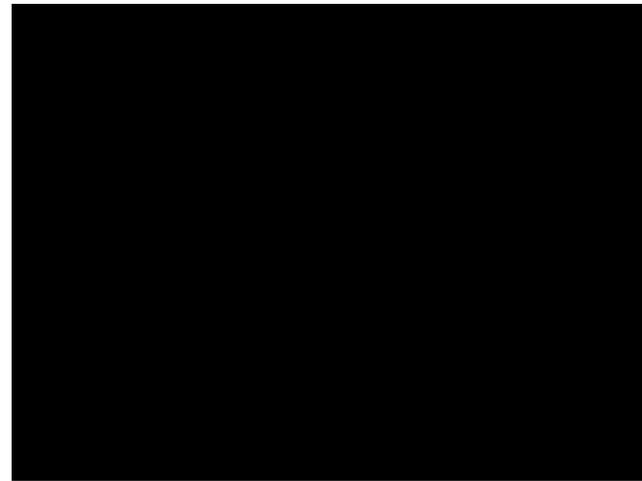




Driving with ADD/ADHD

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Driving Safety for ADD/ADHD Teens



Experts believe that, in order to increase driving safety for a kid with ADD/ADHD, there's a need for significant intervention at the driver training stage. But while modifications clearly are necessary, drivers' education programs traditionally make no distinction between children with and without AAD/ADHD so the training burden for these kids often falls to the parent of the child with AAD/ADHD

Some experts argue that driving can best be taught to teens with ADD/ADHD when they're young – as early as 14. The reasoning behind this is that before a child turns 18 parents have a window of opportunity where they can be both the child's ally while still being in charge so they're able to easily influence, give good instructions and establish safe driving habits.

Experts on teen drivers with ADD/ADHD



of teens admit to
**talking on a
cell phone
while driving**
in the past 30 days.



of teens admit to
**reading a text
message or email
while driving**
in the past 30 days.



TeenDriving.AAA.com



Teaching Teens with ADD/ADHD to Drive

Using an Incentive system

- ▶ Establish an incentive system for practice driving time. Similar to other behavior incentive systems used with kids with ADD/ADHD, this one allows teens to earn practice driving time with parents for every increment of appropriate behavior at home. This program can begin before a learner's permit is issued – as early as age 14 – but only if there are private back roads to practice on in your area.



Allow your child to practice with you as often as possible, and for 20 minutes or more per outing. The more practice they have with you, the better they'll be at driving by themselves in the future.

Use the practice driving time as an opportunity to discuss the special challenges facing drivers with ADD/ADHD. Ask the child: Were you distracted? By what? Ask them to process the experience. These can help them own some of the challenges they face, and it raises their awareness.

Using Practice time

- ▶ Set clear limits, particularly when a learner's permit is issued. "Tell your child you won't sign for the learner's permit unless he or she agrees to abide by certain guidelines," These guidelines might include driving only when a parent or driving teacher is in the car, or driving a certain number of miles with the parent before receiving permission to apply for a driver's license.

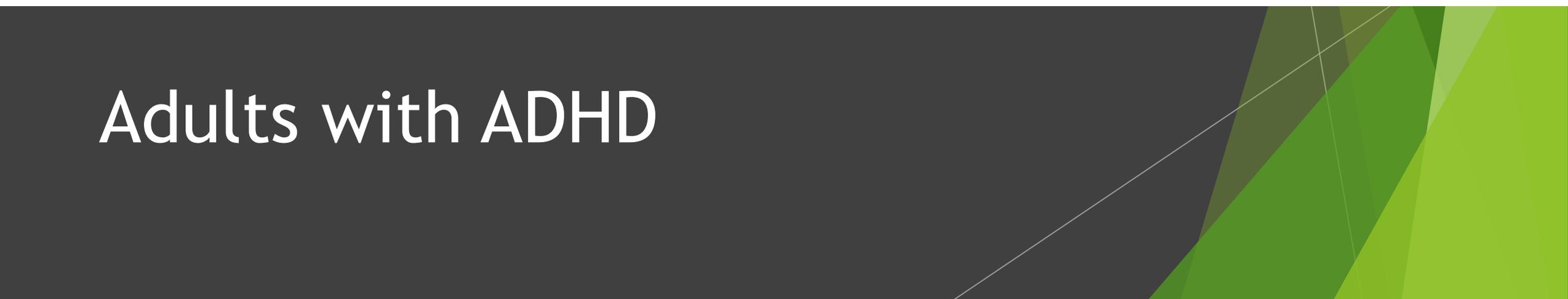
Setting limits

Adults with ADD/ADHD have a higher risk for poor driving incidents than adults without ADD/ADHD.

The untreated symptoms of ADD/ADHD in an adult driver can impair the driver's ability to drive in such a way that it resembles intoxicated driving.

Adults with ADD/ADHD tend to overestimate their driving abilities, even though they may have poorer driving experiences than their peers.

Adults with ADHD



Adults with ADHD

Drivers with ADD/ADHD appear particularly at risk to distractions during periods of low stimulus, or dull, driving.

For adults with ADD/ADHD, leaving cellphones and MP3 players put away or turned off, along with not eating or drinking can help to increase attention and prevent accidents.

Knowing driving routes beforehand and being familiar with directions to the destination will help limit impulsivity.

Although adults with ADD/ADHD with more years of driving practice have an advantage over younger drivers with ADD/ADHD, the symptoms can cause problems for drivers throughout their driving careers.

Improving Driving Skills & Driver Safety

Reduce

Reduce distractions in the car, including using electronics. This means turning cell-phones off completely, or otherwise disabling all "notifications."

Know

Know state traffic laws, including the correct use of turn signals/indicators, blinkers and speed zone requirements. Contact your state department of motor vehicles if you have questions about particular laws.

Attend and pass

Attend and pass a driver education program that addresses ADD/ADHD concerns if necessary.

Improving driving skills & driver safety

Repeated research has shown that stimulant medication greatly improves driving performance for adults with ADD/ADHD.

As part of a comprehensive treatment plan, taking medication can make a big difference in reducing the risk of negative driving experiences, including accidents.

Work with your health-care provider to develop and follow *your ADD/ADHD* treatment plan. In doing so, consider the role medication has been shown to play in improved driving ability.

- ▶ Depending on the individual's specific symptoms of ADD/ADHD, supplemental driver training may need to focus on specific symptoms of ADD/ADHD, such as controlling negative emotions or improving skills to pay attention

Supplemental Driver Training



Setting Driving Rules

Restrict driving to necessary expeditions such as school and team events, or after school or summer jobs.

No night driving for the first six months without a parent on hand.

Plan each trip must ahead and discussing it with the parent beforehand.

No passengers except parents allowed for at least the first three to six months. After that, only one passenger allowed for the first year or two. Parents should approve all passengers.

Zero tolerance for alcohol and substance use. Immediately suspend all driving privileges until your child has successfully completed a treatment program. Keep the car keys in your possession until all substance abuse issues are resolved.

Keep a log and check in after each trip. Teens should note where they went, how long it took, and what difficulties and distractions were encountered. Parents and teens can then discuss the log, and come up with ways to improve concentration and avoid problems.



▶ **ADD/ADHD Safety
Tips**

Acknowledge that you have a disorder that may impact your driving skills. Like all drivers, people with ADD/ADHD need to make sure they are focused on the task. Unlike other drivers, they may need extra help to do so.

No cellular phone use while driving. Drivers with ADD/ADHD who have cell phones should keep the phone off to stop incoming calls, restrict phone use to emergencies, and at the very least should pull over whenever making a call. Never take notes while driving.

Limit music sources and choices. Some drivers with ADD/ADHD find music helps them concentrate. Others find it distracting. Whatever the case, choose a music source that limits attention-grabbing fumbling. Use only pre-set radio stations, and if using a tape or CD player, carry only one CD or tape per trip to eliminate the temptation to search through a stack of them while driving.

Drive without passengers, or choose passengers carefully. Passengers can be extremely distracting, particularly when teens with ADD/ADHD drive with friends or parents with ADHD drive with young children. Have your passengers ride in the back seat, if possible, to minimize distracting interactions.

Plan trips ahead, and leave yourself plenty of time. Organizing your trip beforehand allows you to focus on the task of driving, rather than on directions. In addition, if you don't get lost, you're less likely to be in a rush which can lead to speeding or running red lights.

If you must consult a map, pull over to the side of the road to read it. Avoid impulsively deciding to drive somewhere without organizing where you are headed and how you are going to get there.

References

CHADD - The National Resource on ADHD

www.additudemag.com

totallyadd.com