

# Center for ADHD Connection

A newsletter for parents of children with ADHD,  
our collaborators and community partners



Spring 2013

[www.cincinnatichildrens.org/adhd](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/adhd)

## ADHD Medication Holidays: Deciding what's best for your child

William B. Brinkman, MD, MEd

Many parents ask their child's doctor whether taking an ADHD medication holiday on weekends or school breaks is a good idea. However, the answer really depends on the goals and preferences of each family. Here are some questions for parents to consider when deciding what is best for their child:

- How much more does your child struggle when not taking medicine for ADHD?
- How do these struggles impact your family life and your child's friendships?
- Has your child's growth been stunted by taking medicine for ADHD?
- Does your child have bothersome side effects from medicine for ADHD?

Many children with ADHD have problems outside of school that may be worse if they are not taking medication. For example, they may have problems playing games/sports if they don't wait to take their turn or don't follow the rules. It can also be frustrating if they can't pay attention long enough to listen to other children, parents, or coaches. Parents and coaches may get tired of repeating themselves over and over. This can become a vicious cycle. Children's self-esteem can suffer if they lose friends and/or frequently argue with their parents and other adults.

Side effects from ADHD medications are also common. For some children, side effects are relatively minor. For others, the amount of medicine needed to improve ADHD symptoms can cause bothersome side effects. This can be especially troubling to parents when their child isn't growing as well as they did before taking medicine.

Parents may feel giving medicine nearly every day is an easy decision if their child is clearly benefiting from medication without bothersome side effects.

For other children, parents may approach this decision as a balancing act. Parents may feel like they only have bad options to choose from: stop medication and watch their child's problem behaviors get worse or continue to watch their child suffer from side effects. Parents in this situation may try reducing the amount of medication given on non-school days. This can provide a middle ground for families as the lower dosage provides some benefit while lessening side effects. Other parents may prefer to take a break from medications.

Most importantly, discussing these issues as a family and with your child's doctor can help you decide whether an ADHD medication holiday is right for your child.



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## Contact Information

For more information about Cincinnati Children's Center for ADHD, please contact the Division of Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology Intake Line at 513-636-4336, and press #. The center is located on our Oak Campus at:

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## About this Newsletter

The Center for ADHD Connection newsletter is published two times each year. To be added or removed from the mailing list for this newsletter, email us at [ADHD@cchmc.org](mailto:ADHD@cchmc.org).

To give feedback about the newsletter or if you have a story idea, email us at [ADHD@cchmc.org](mailto:ADHD@cchmc.org).

## From the director

Jeff N. Epstein, PhD



Hello! I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on several of the topics that were featured in previous newsletters.

### MyADHD Portal Web Site News:

First, in a past newsletter (Spring, 2011), we told you about our web-based program called [myADHDportal.com](http://myADHDportal.com). The myADHDportal website provides tools to help pediatricians improve their care for children with ADHD. Following the success of the portal in the Cincinnati area, I am happy to report that we have partnered with a national healthcare marketing company with the goal of allowing pediatricians across the US to use this software and improve care for their patients with ADHD.

### ADHD and Cell Phone Use While Driving Study Findings:

You also may have read an article in a previous newsletter (Fall, 2011) about a research study we conducted looking at the effects of cell phone conversation and texting on the driving behavior of adolescents with ADHD. We recently finished this research study and just had an article reporting the results accepted in *Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics*. The results of this study will be included in an upcoming newsletter.

### Expanded Services:

We noted in a previous newsletter that we were expanding our services to include an academic skills group for older adolescents (grades 9-10), in addition to our existing study skills group for younger adolescents (grades 6-8). The response to this new clinical service was fantastic. Based on the satisfaction of the families attending the first two groups, we intend to offer more of these groups in the upcoming school year.

### ADHD Expert Presentations:

Finally, we are proud to have hosted Dr. Robert Brooks for a series of presentations to parents and professionals this past January. These presentations drew over 300 families and over 150 professionals. The presentations were excellent and well-received. We look forward to bringing additional ADHD experts to Cincinnati in the future, to help local parents and professionals stay educated about new developments in ADHD.

### Contact Us:

Please remember that we'd like to hear from you. If you have suggestions for features that you'd like to see in future newsletters, or if you have suggestions for our Center, please email us at [ADHD@cchmc.org](mailto:ADHD@cchmc.org).

## Center for ADHD Clinical Services

The Center for ADHD currently provides the following evidence-based services for the families of children and adolescents with ADHD:

- ADHD Evaluations
- Parent training groups for parents of children with ADHD between the ages of 6 and 12 years
- Managing frustration group for children with ADHD between the ages of 9 and 11 years (in third through fifth grades)
- Academic success group for young adolescents with ADHD between the grades of 6th-8th.
- Individual/Family therapy services
- Parent training groups for parents of preschoolers (ages 3.5 to 5) who have been or are at risk for being diagnosed with ADHD
- Academic success group for high school students (9th and 10th grades) with ADHD

Learn more about our clinical services by visiting our web site at [www.cincinnatichildrens.org/adhd](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/adhd), or call the Division of Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology Intake Line at 513-636-4336, and press #.

## Join an ADHD research study

Our researchers conduct studies to learn more about and work to find treatments for ADHD. Parents and kids can help by joining a research study. Current research studies include:

### Needed: Teens 16 and 17 Years Old With ADD or ADHD

#### What

This is a research study to learn more about how families with a teenager who has a history of ADD or ADHD make driving decisions. Researchers also want to learn more about how doctors can help teen drivers with a history of ADD or ADHD drive more safely.

#### Who

Teenagers 16 or 17 years old with a history of ADD or ADHD, and one of their parents may be eligible to participate.

#### Pay

Families will receive up to \$100 for this one-visit study (lasting up to 2 hours).

#### Details

For more information, contact Annie Garner, PhD at [annie.garner@cchmc.org](mailto:annie.garner@cchmc.org) or 513-636-8269.

### Research Study for Children in Grades 2 to 5 With Attention Problems and Reading Difficulties

#### ADHD and Reading Intervention Study

#### What

This is a research study to learn more about ways to treat children who have ADHD (either diagnosed or not yet diagnosed) and also struggle with reading.

- > After being screened at school, children who qualify will receive an ADHD evaluation and reading assessment followed by 16 weeks of intervention at no cost to families.

#### Who

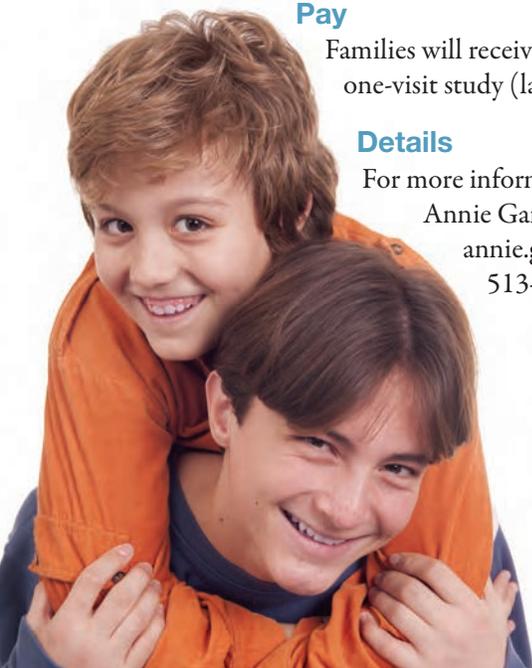
Children in grades 2 to 5 who have attention problems and struggle with reading (noticed by a parent or teacher) may be eligible to participate.

#### Pay

Families will receive up to \$200 for time and effort.

#### Details

For more information, email us at [ICARD@cchmc.org](mailto:ICARD@cchmc.org) or call 513-803-0068.



*Continued on the back cover*

# Why do kids with ADHD struggle?

Annie Artiga Garner, PhD



Parents are not surprised to learn that most kids with ADHD struggle in many areas of life. This is especially true in their personal relationships and at school.

**At the Center for ADHD, our team wanted to find out why these struggles happen.**

We looked at how symptoms of ADHD (like getting distracted, forgetting things, not sitting still, and interrupting) are related to relationships with others and success at school. We also looked at how difficulties with depression and worrying, learning problems, and oppositional behavior are related to these struggles.

Ratings by nearly 8,000 parents and teachers of children's symptoms of ADHD, oppositional behavior, and worry/depression were examined. Parents and teachers also rated children's academic and behavior problems at school, and problems in relationships with family and peers.

**For kids with ADHD, problems paying attention were most strongly related to whether or not they were having academic problems at school. In fact, having a learning disability was less important than getting distracted and not paying close attention.**

Hyperactive and impulsive behaviors were related to having more behavior problems at school. However, oppositional behaviors (like arguing with adults or losing your temper) were related to having more problems getting along with family and peers.

These findings suggest that, for most kids with ADHD:

**1. Academic problems may not mean that your child has a learning disability.**

For many kids with ADHD, their academic problems are primarily a result of their difficulties with paying attention. Therefore, improving their academics requires improving their ability to resist distractions and stay on task. Research suggests that, in many cases, a combination of classroom accommodations and use of medication is the best ways to accomplish such improvements.

**2. Behavior problems at school are not always done on purpose or out of defiance.**

A child who has problems sitting still and is prone to interrupting others can be very disruptive in the classroom. Parents and teachers are encouraged to work together to develop a behavior plan that rewards positive classroom behaviors such as sitting in seat or raising one's hand and waiting to be called on before speaking.

**3. Oppositional behavior can put a big strain on relationships.**

Arguing, losing one's temper, and refusing to follow rules put a strain on any relationship. Families of children experiencing these difficulties often benefit from working with a mental health professional to learn more effective ways of managing such behaviors. For children under the age of 5, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) can be very helpful. For older kids and teens, interventions that teach family members how to solve problems together and communicate without arguing are often helpful.

## Does taking medication really help my child succeed at school?

Joshua Langberg, PhD, Stephen Becker, MA, and Aaron Vaughn, PhD

*“My child’s school keeps telling me to put my child on medication.”*

Parents often hear such “encouragements” from school staff or teachers to consider medication for their child. However, this decision is often scary for parents and deserves to be taken seriously.

Students with ADHD often experience significant problems at school. These problems, if not addressed, can result in failing grades, being held back, and dropping out of school. Currently, 60% of children with ADHD take medication to improve their behavior or school performance. It is very important to understand whether taking medication improves a child’s success at school.

**Research shows that taking medication improves ability to complete classwork, answer more problems on tests, and score higher on tests, at least in the short term. However, questions remain about whether medication improves the academic success of students with ADHD over the course of multiple years.**

To answer this question, Joshua Langberg, Ph.D. and Stephen Becker, M.A. reviewed past research studies that followed students with ADHD for at least three years. They were interested in school grades, achievement test scores, and not being held back as signs of success at school.

Nine studies including over 8,000 students with ADHD were reviewed. Overall, students with ADHD who were taking medication over the long-term did have higher scores on standardized achievement tests than children not taking medication.

Children taking medication also had slightly better grades and were less likely to be held back. However, these differences in school grades were so small that parents and teachers may not be able to notice them. Thus, parents must consider the benefits of medication in their own child’s life. This is especially important in relation to progress towards bigger goals like graduating from high school and going to college.

### Reference:

Langberg, J. M., & Becker, S. P. (2012). Does long-term medication use improve the academic outcomes of youth with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder? *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 15, 215-233.



There are a few things to keep in mind when making decisions about medication:

- 1. Medication is not the only treatment option for ADHD.**  
The best outcomes for children with ADHD result from a combining treatments such as medication, behavioral parent training and academic interventions. Discuss the benefits of medication and other options with your doctor before making any decisions.
- 2. Always have your child’s doctor closely monitor your child’s medication and behavior.**  
It often takes multiple tries with different medications and dosages to find what works best for your child.
- 3. Medication does not work for everyone who has ADHD.**  
However, when medication does work, the benefits can be truly helpful.

# Upcoming Center for ADHD Group Program Schedules

## Understanding and Managing ADHD in Preschoolers Parent Group Program

This NEW program is for the parents of children ages 3.5 to 5 who have been or are at risk for being diagnosed with ADHD. In addition to up-to-date information about ADHD and how it affects their child's behavior, parents also learn specific evidence-based techniques for providing the structure and guidance that a preschool-aged child with ADHD needs to succeed both at home and at preschool/kindergarten. Sessions are held on the same day each week for a total of 8 group sessions, with each session lasting 75-90 minutes. The material in each session builds on that covered in prior sessions, so it is important that parents attend each session in order to get the greatest benefit from the program. A pre-group interview with the parent(s) is typically required.

Day/Dates	Time	CCHMC Location	Therapist
Thu 04/11/13 to 06/06/13	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Mason Campus	Beverly H. Smolyansky, PhD
Wed 05/29/13 to 07/24/13 <sup>a</sup>	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Oak Campus	Heather A. Ciesielski, PhD
Mon 08/19/13 to 10/14/13 <sup>b</sup>	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Oak Campus	Heather A. Ciesielski, PhD

<sup>a</sup> Skips 07/03

<sup>b</sup> Skips 09/02 (Labor Day)

## Understanding and Managing ADHD Parent Group Program

This program is for the parents of children ages 6 to 12 with a primary diagnosis of ADHD. Parents obtain an up-to-date understanding of ADHD and how it affects their child's behavior. They also receive training in the use of specific evidence-based techniques for providing the structure and guidance that a child with ADHD needs to succeed behaviorally, academically, and socially. Sessions are held on the same day each week for a total of 8 group sessions, with each session lasting 90 minutes. The material in each session builds on that covered in prior sessions, so it is important that parents attend each session in order to get the greatest benefit from the program. A pre-group interview with the parent(s) is typically required.

Day/Dates	Time	CCHMC Location	Therapist
Tue 04/02/13 to 05/21/13	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Eastgate	James Brewer, EdD
Wed 04/03/13 to 05/22/13	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Oak Campus	Heather A. Ciesielski, PhD
Wed 04/10/13 to 05/29/13	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Liberty Campus	Richard E. A. Loren, PhD
Thu 05/02/13 to 06/27/13 <sup>a</sup>	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Oak Campus	Heather A. Ciesielski, PhD
Tue 05/07/13 to 06/25/13	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Fairfield	William Sirbu, PhD
Thu 05/09/13 to 06/27/13	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Eastgate	Rebecca Kniskern, PhD
Thu 06/20/13 to 08/15/13	4:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Mason Campus	Beverly H. Smolyansky, PhD
Wed 07/10/13 to 08/28/13	12:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Oak Campus	Richard E. A. Loren, PhD
Thu 08/15/13 to 10/10/13 <sup>b</sup>	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Oak Campus	Richard E. A. Loren, PhD
Thu 08/29/13 to 10/24/13	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Fairfield	Kristine Huiet, PhD
Mon 09/09/13 to 10/28/13	4:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Mason Campus	Tara Proano-Raps, PsyD
Mon 09/16/13 to 11/04/13	5:30 pm – 7:00 pm	Green Township	F. Lynne Merk, PhD
Wed 09/18/13 to 11/06/13	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Oak Campus	Aaron J. Vaughn, PhD
Wed 09/18/13 to 11/06/13	5:30 pm – 7:00 pm	Eastgate	Rebecca Kniskern, PhD
Tue 10/08/13 to 11/26/13	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Oak Campus	Jessica E. M. Cyran, PhD
Wed 10/16/13 to 12/11/13 <sup>c</sup>	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Mason Campus	Beverly H. Smolyansky, PhD
Mon 10/21/13 to 12/09/13	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Oak Campus	Heather A. Ciesielski, PhD
Tue 10/22/13 to 12/10/13	5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Fairfield	William Sirbu, PhD
Wed 10/23/13 to 12/18/13 <sup>c</sup>	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Liberty Campus	Richard E. A. Loren, PhD

<sup>a</sup> Skips 06/06

<sup>b</sup> Skips 09/26

<sup>c</sup> Skips 11/27 (Wednesday before Thanksgiving)

### Managing Frustration for Children with ADHD Group Program

This program is designed to address the problems many children with ADHD have with managing their frustration. It is not an alternative treatment for the core problems with attention regulation and/or impulse control associated with ADHD. The program is most effective for children whose core symptoms of ADHD are under reasonably good control via ongoing medication and environmental management. To participate in this group, a child must be between the ages of 9 and 11 and be currently in third through fifth grades. Offered only at the Center for ADHD, this program is always on Monday afternoons starting at 4:30 pm. In addition to a required pre-group interview with the parent(s) and child, there are a total of 12 group sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. Children attend sessions 1 through 5 and 7 through 12, while parents attend session 6 without the child.

Day/Dates	Time	CCHMC Location	Therapist
Mon 06/03/13 to 08/26/13b	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Oak Campus	Richard E. A. Loren, PhD
Mon 09/30/13 to 12/16/13	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Oak Campus	Richard E. A. Loren, PhD

<sup>a</sup> Skips 04/01 (Easter Monday)

<sup>b</sup> Skips 07/01

### Academic Success for Young Adolescents with ADHD Group Program

This program is designed for young adolescents in sixth through eighth grades who are experiencing academic difficulties as a result of ADHD. It teaches adolescents and their parents (who both attend sessions) specific strategies such as organizational skills, time management, and study skills. This program is held only at the Center for ADHD. There are a total of 7 group sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. In addition, a pre-group interview with the parent(s) is also required.

Day/Dates	Time	CCHMC Location	Therapist
Tue 08/20/13 to 10/01/13	4:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Oak Campus	Jessica E. M. Cyran, PhD
Thu 09/12/13 to 10/24/13	5:30 pm – 7:00 pm	Oak Campus	Heather A. Ciesielski, PhD

### Academic Success for High Schoolers (Freshman & Sophomores) with ADHD Group Program

This pilot program is designed for freshman and sophomores in high school who are experiencing academic difficulties as a result of ADHD. It teaches adolescents and their parents (who both attend weekly sessions) specific strategies such as organizational skills, time management, and study skills. This program is held only at the Center for ADHD. There are a total of 7 group sessions, each lasting 90 minutes. In addition, a pre-group interview with the parent(s) and the adolescent together is also required.

Day/Dates	Time	CCHMC Location	Therapist
Starting in late Aug/Early Sept (specific day and dates TBA)	TBA	Oak Campus	Aaron J. Vaughn, PhD



Center for ADHD

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## Join an ADHD research study *continued*



### **Needed: Preschool Children With Self-Control Difficulties**

#### **What**

This is a research study to develop and test an intervention that teaches self-control, memory and the ability to concentrate and focus to preschoolers and their parents.

#### **Who**

Preschool children 3 and 4 years old who have self-control problems may be eligible to participate.

#### **Pay**

Families will receive up to \$100 for their time.

#### **Details**

For more information, contact the study coordinator at [preschoolstudy@cchmc.org](mailto:preschoolstudy@cchmc.org) or 513-803-1345.

### **Make a Donation to the Center for ADHD**

As a not-for-profit hospital and research center, Cincinnati Children's depends on donations from the generous people who support us. If you would like to give back, contact Mara McClellan at 513-636-1994, or visit [www.cincinnatichildrens.org/donate](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/donate) and designate your gift to the Center for ADHD.