**ADHD Medication in Schools -**

**An Update from the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Paediatrics Service**

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition affecting 5% of the UK population (approximately 1 in 30). The three main features of ADHD are Inattention, Hyperactivity, and Impulsivity. However, not all children and young people with ADHD will experience challenges in all these areas.

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) have produced guidelines which recommend medication to be used in severe or moderate ADHD where other approaches have not proven effective. Medication may be a valuable addition to help students concentrate, learn, and behave more effectively but it should be used as one part of a wide range of psychological, educational and developmental therapies and not as the only strategy employed to manage ADHD successfully. A child and adolescent psychiatrist or paediatrician can assess if medication is appropriate.

There are two types of medications – stimulant and non-stimulant – that are recommended as options for the treatment of ADHD. The dose of medication will be tailored to the student’s needs and may change as they get older, depending on their response and any side effects.

To ensure that your student receives the full benefit of their medication, it is important that it is taken as prescribed. Some medications are taken before school and their effects last for the whole school day. Other medications last for a shorter amount of time and will have to be taken during the school day – this could mean a supply is kept at school. It is important to address any issues around taking medication at school to ensure that they do not miss a dose for any reason. The student’s doctor or parents will explain the dosing regimen and appreciate your support in ensuring your student takes the medication. ADHD medications (those that are stimulants) are controlled drugs so they must be kept in a locked container and kept out of reach of children. Clinicians advise that medication is taken with food and children should be allowed a water bottle during lessons as the medication can cause a dry mouth.

It is important that student progress is monitored when they start treatment for their ADHD. The student’s doctor will want to monitor not only their development and learning and whether their treatment is working, but also whether they are experiencing any side effects if they are taking medication so that treatment can be adjusted if necessary. The paediatrician may request school report forms and/or Conners' questionnaires to be completed before clinic appointments, and they do appreciate the time that these take for teachers to complete. They are, however, very helpful in ensuring that the child/young person is on the correct medication and dosage.

Any medication that is recommended by your student’s health professional has the potential to cause side effects which can be different in each student. It is important that your student’s health professional is aware of any changes that occur once they start taking their medication, so please try to keep a record of anything you notice at school.

*Information adapted from the ADHD foundation.*

There are many wonderful resources to support schools with teaching students with ADHD, please see the links below.

<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Teaching-and-Managing-Students-with-ADHD.pdf>

<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ADHD_Found_Takeda_RefocusingOnADHDInEducation.pdf>

**Further Information about ADHD…**

ADHD is associated with lower levels and utility of the neurotransmitters dopamine and noradrenaline. We all naturally need dopamine – especially when engaged in tasks that require sustained concentration.

We produce dopamine ‘the feel-good hormone’ when we engage in experiences that we find positive. When we understand the role of dopamine in the brain, then we can understand why children and young people with ADHD can be highly distractible, constantly seeking new stimuli and experiences, and present with difficulties in activities that they are not particularly interested in.

The ADHD brain also has instinctive adaptability, for example a greater capacity for visual imagery, which could be a compensation strategy for poor working memory. Children with ADHD can be hyper-active because moving increases the production of dopamine in the brain which in turn supports learning, memory, motivation, and mood regulation.

ADHD is a medical condition that requires specific support depending on severity of the symptoms. Understanding ADHD together with the desire to adapt teaching and learning strategies can enable many students with ADHD to learn more effectively, and there are a number of strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to support students with ADHD.

The Bedfordshire and Luton community paediatric specialist nursing team can be contacted via the Health HUB by young people, parents/carers or education settings if support is required for managing ADHD medication in school.

**Health HUB contact details**

**Telephone: 0300 555 0606**

**Email: ccs.bedsandlutonchildrenshealthhub@nhs.net**

*Co-Produced in Partnership with Bedfordshire and Luton Parent Care Forums*

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