

Change Your Expectations

- Give your child warnings before you move him from one activity to another (when moving from play to meals, or at bedtime, for example).
- Avoid situations that your child can't cope with until the needed skills are learned.
- Plan ahead and recognize warning signs of trouble.
- Listen to your child and teach listening skills.
- Give a lot of reassurance.
- Rehearse and practise trips.
- Plan childcare and preschool placements carefully.
- Try not to blame your child or yourself.

What if I am still concerned after trying these things?

It is normal for preschool children to be very active and have a lot of energy. If you feel your child's behaviour is more intense and happens more often than with other children you know, talk with your family doctor, or pediatrician.

If you have questions or concerns, please call Access Mental Health at 403-943-1500 or your family doctor.

health information

Coping with Active and Inattentive Children

This material is for information purposes only. It should not be used in place of medical advice, instruction, and/or treatment. If you have questions, speak with your doctor or appropriate healthcare provider.



Pre-school children can have very different activity levels and attention spans. Children are usually very active at this age.

Questions to Ask

Try to understand your child better by asking yourself:

- What triggers her bursts of energy and inattention?
- Is he aggressive, need to control situations, or a poor listener?
- Does he have explosive temper tantrums?
- Can she play properly with toys?
- Are his movements awkward?
- Does he seem to lack normal fear?
- Does he have unexpected mood changes?
- Does she have sleep problems?
- Is he noisy, aggressive, and disruptive in groups?
- Does he demand attention?
- How does she play with children her own age?
- Is he more sensitive to sounds, smells, and sights than other children?
- What are his strengths?

Understanding your child will help you to plan the ways you can help.

What do I do?

Take Care of Yourself

Parenting an active, inattentive child is very challenging. It is important for you to plan time away from your child to relax. Taking care of yourself helps you to have the energy and commitment to help your child.

Find Support in Your Community

A parenting course can help you look at your parenting style and find ways to manage your frustration and anger. Do you expect too much or too little of your child? Are you overly rigid or inflexible? For example, do you insist that your child sit quietly during adult conversations? Do you expect him to stop watching his favourite television show right away and listen to you when you speak to him?

Play

- Plan a lot of outdoor physical activity.
- Put toys into several separate containers and give only one container at a time.
- Plan for “special” playtime with him, when he can expect to have your full attention.
- To begin with, limit playmates to one at a time.

Change the Environment to Support Your Child’s Needs

- Try to avoid over-stimulation like bright colours, noise, or a lot of pictures on the wall.
- Turn off distractions like the TV and radio as much as possible.
- Do one activity at a time.
- Have regular routines for sleep and eating.

Manage the Behaviour

- Use simple and short statements, visual prompts, and make eye contact.
- Spend more time noticing good behaviour than bad.
- When possible, ignore active behaviour.
- Model the behaviour you want.
- Focus on one or two problem behaviours at a time.
- Set reasonable rules and stick to them. A positive discipline approach should be used right away for unacceptable behaviour.