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Remote Learning for Students with ADHD

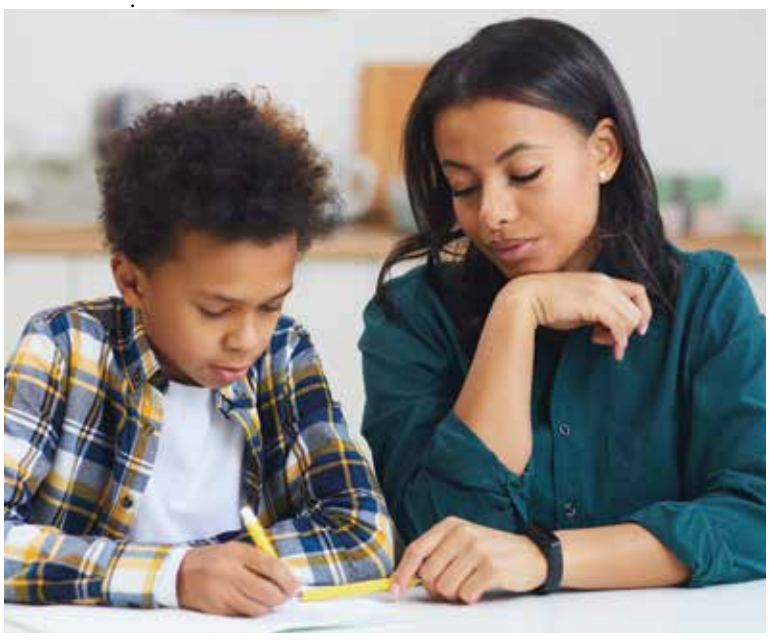
HOW ARE CHILDREN WITH ADHD FARING with the shift to remote learning during the pandemic? What are parental factors that enhance child learning and well-being? This update on recent research reviews two studies.

The first study found no negative short-term impact on academic outcomes for children with ADHD with the shift to remote learning, although there appeared to be negative emotional consequences. The second study found that children with and without ADHD did not differ in their challenges with remote learning, although children with ADHD had more psychological difficulties. This study also outlined specific parent factors for child risk and resilience during the pandemic, such as parental psychological difficulties, parenting, and parental confidence in providing support to their children with remote learning.

Together, these findings suggest remote learning may not have had an academic impact on children with ADHD in particular and that particular parental factors are important to child outcomes.

Did remote learning affect academic achievement?

This study examined the impact on academic achievement in 5- to 12-year-old students with ADHD from the transition to the remote learning due to COVID-19. Researchers collected the academic achievement scores from 85 children with ADHD in Cohort One (2018–2019) and 116 children with ADHD in Cohort Two (2019–2020) before and after transitioning to remote learning due to COVID-19. Teachers also outlined the remote learning practices they used. Additionally, parents and teachers completed surveys rating their perceptions of the child's experience with remote learning at the end of the school year.



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Seventy percent of children in this study had ADHD, combined presentation; 20% of children had ADHD, predominantly inattentive presentation; and 5% of children had ADHD, predominantly hyperactive/impulsive presentation. Participating students completed academic achievement testing (in reading, writing, and math) at the start and end of the academic year. Cohort One testing occurred pre-pandemic, and for Cohort Two, testing at the start of the school year occurred pre-pandemic and testing at the end of the school year occurred during COVID-19. Students in Cohort Two had remote learning for about 90 days in a variety of formats, with the majority of time in synchronous, whole group instruction with independently completed assignments.

The findings demonstrated that teachers perceived the remote learning transition to be neutral or slightly positive in impact. Similarly, parent ratings suggested that the transition did not have a detrimental impact on child functioning. However, parents reported that children had worsened emotional states (sadness, anger, frustration) during the pandemic. Results revealed no significant differences in achievement scores when compared between the two cohorts. Within each cohort, academic achievement in reading and writing increased from the start of the school year to the end of the school year, whereas math scores only increased during the school year for Cohort One and not for Cohort Two.

On the whole, these results indicate that remote learning may not have differentially impacted the academic achievement of students with ADHD in the short-term, although results also suggest consequences for child emotions and a potential long-term impact on math achievement.

Lupas KK, Mavrakis A, Altszuler A, Tower D, Gnagy E, MacPhee F, Ramos M, Merrill B, Ward L, Gordon C, Schatz N, Fabiano G, & Pelham W. (2021). The short-term impact of remote instruction on achievement in children with ADHD during the COVID-19 pandemic. *School Psychology*, 36, 313-324. https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000474.supp

Do parental factors increase risk and resilience?

This study examined how children with and without ADHD experienced challenges with remote learning as well as how parent factors predict child psychological difficulties and challenges with remote learning. Two-hundred and ninety-one parents of 6- to 13-year-old children participated in this study; 148 of these were parents whose children have ADHD. Participants completed online questionnaires that examined areas such as parent mental health, parenting, child mental health, and child challenges with academics during COVID-19.

The findings showed that parents' depressive and anxious symptoms, stress, and negative parenting (inconsistent discipline, poor supervision, corporal punishment) were a risk factor for negative child outcomes (that is, psychological symptoms, challenges with remote learning). As well, this study identified parental factors of child resilience, which include parental confidence in supporting their child's remote learning. In particular, parents with higher confidence in supporting their children in remote learning had children with less psychological and remote learning challenges.

Interestingly, parents who were more involved with their children were found to have children with more problems with remote learning, possibly because children with more difficulties with remote learning may have needed more parental involvement. There were no differences found in level of problems with remote learning between children with and without ADHD. However, children with ADHD had more psychological difficulties than children without ADHD during COVID-19.

Overall, this study found that during the pandemic children with ADHD experienced more psychological challenges than children without ADHD and outlined specific parenting factors that increase risk and resilience for child outcomes.

Silverman MR, Stadterman J, Lorenzi D, Feuerstahler L, Hirsch E, & Roy AK. (2022). Parental factors that confer risk and resilience for remote learning outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic among children with and without Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. *Journal of Attention Disorders*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/10870547221084670

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