

## **AD/HD and Driving – Advice for Parents**

### **1 Display good adult driving habits.**

Your children and passengers in your car have observed your driving. They have watched your every action. Is it good enough to be a role model? Do you use your mobile phone while driving? Do you speed excessively? Would you be comfortable if your teenager drove as you do?

### **2 Determine the readiness of the learner to drive.**

Young people with AD/HD are often emotionally and functionally immature when compared to others of the same age. Teenagers with AD/HD, therefore, may take significantly longer to develop good judgement and a mature attitude to driving. Teenagers who have explosive tempers, are uncooperative or cannot meet their current responsibilities are **not** ready to drive.

### **3 Ensure the learner driver fully understands the Highway Code.**

This will ensure that the learner driver is aware of the rules of the road before they begin driving. They will also understand why these are the rules they are expected to obey.

### **4 Address AD/HD and any other conditions or behaviour that impact on driving safely.**

Learning to drive safely is a serious issue. When this is made more difficult by having AD/HD the parents and the young learner driver must make efforts to understand these complications and work to minimise the risks involved.

### **5 Select driver education materials and plan the content of driving lessons.**

When giving private driving lessons ensure that the lesson has been prepared beforehand. Ensure the instructor has the route planned and allotted a timescale to the lesson. The learner driver should also be prepared, ensuring they have taken any prescribed medication and are in a suitable mental and emotional condition to concentrate. If neither of these are in place, cancel the lesson.

### **6 Consider medication issues and driving safety.**

Research has shown that AD/HD behaviours can be significantly improved with medication use. Some of the known benefits include an increase in attention span and concentration. Individuals who have been prescribed medication should only drive within the time limits of the particular medication they are taking. Do you know what they are for your child's medication?

### **7 Establish an incentive scheme for AD/HD drivers.**

Parents of children with AD/HD often use incentives to encourage their children to complete a particular task. Driving is no different. Some parents also state that driving is a powerful incentive to encourage everyday behaviour. Encourage your young person to work for the privilege of driving and the responsibility attached to it by developing a reward system.

**8 Carry out the driving lesson plans.**

It is common to underestimate the time needed to teach an individual to drive. A learner driver with AD/HD will take **at least 3 times** longer to learn to drive. You should keep a log of hours and driving skills demonstrated during the lessons. This will enable you to check on progress and chart consistent faults. It will also allow the instructor to identify times of the day when the AD/HD driver performs badly and provide lessons at a more appropriate time.

**9 Discuss safe driving expectations with the AD/HD driver.**

Parents when considering whether to allow their child to drive should discuss the fact that there is a danger if they drink, smoke or use their mobile telephone whilst driving. If they insist they should not be allowed to begin driving.

**10 Negotiate new rules after the AD/HD driver has passed their test.**

Having passed their test the new driver is read to drive a car without adult supervision. Some new rules should be established before they drive alone:

- Consider curfew times for weekdays and weekends in line with medication.
- Discuss what times of day they can drive.
- Discuss the consequences of an accident.
- Restrict passengers totally if possible.
- Keep a record of the persons driving.
- Ensure they know what to do in an emergency.
- Set rules for the use of the family car.
- Include rewards for compliance.
- Enforce no drinking and driving rules.
- Determine who pays for petrol, insurance and driving tickets.

*Extract from 'The Tipping Points' by Phil Anderton PhD*