

## ■ Strategies for Girls & Women with ADHD During Hormonal Changes

(Puberty • Menstruation • Pregnancy • Menopause)

Hormones strongly influence dopamine and norepinephrine — brain chemicals central to ADHD. Shifts in estrogen and progesterone can magnify inattention, overwhelm, and emotional reactivity. These strategies help stabilize focus and functioning across the lifespan.

### ■ PUBERTY

**What Happens:** Rising estrogen and progesterone can increase emotional intensity and self-criticism. ADHD may become more noticeable as school and social demands grow.

- Teach organization early — color-coded planners, visual reminders.
- Encourage body awareness: track moods and focus changes during the month.
- Build self-esteem: praise effort and progress, not perfection.
- Provide calm spaces for decompression after school.
- Normalize therapy or coaching for emotional regulation skills.

### ■ MENSTRUATION

**What Happens:** Estrogen dips before and during menstruation often worsen focus, impulsivity, and mood swings.

- Track cycle patterns — note 'hard focus' days.
- Schedule demanding tasks mid-cycle (higher estrogen).
- Use digital reminders during premenstrual brain fog.
- Ask your clinician about timing or brief medication adjustments.
- Support nutrition: balanced meals with protein, omega-3s, magnesium, and iron.
- Protect sleep and hydration — both strongly affect focus.

### ■ PREGNANCY

**What Happens:** Progesterone dominates; changing estrogen affects motivation, sleep, and attention. Many women pause stimulants.

- Build external structure: lists, alarms, shared calendars.
- Use 15-minute task sprints to reduce overwhelm.
- Protect sleep: quiet bedtime routine, partner help if possible.
- Maintain consistent nutrition and hydration.
- Seek ADHD-aware therapy or coaching.

- Discuss medication safety early with your OB-GYN; shared decisions matter.

## ■ MENOPAUSE

**What Happens:** Estrogen and progesterone decline, often causing brain fog and fatigue.

- Continue ADHD treatment if prescribed; reassess doses as needed.
- Discuss hormone replacement therapy (HRT) options with your provider.
- Use strong external systems — checklists, reminders, simplified routines.
- Exercise regularly and maintain sleep hygiene.
- Reduce decision fatigue — batch errands, plan meals, set consistent schedules.

## ■ UNIVERSAL SUPPORTS

- Maintain consistent sleep, movement, and nutrition.
- Practice self-compassion — hormonal ADHD shifts are biological, not moral failures.
- Seek providers familiar with female ADHD and hormonal influences.
- Involve supportive partners, teachers, or peers for accountability.

**Sources:** ACOG (2023); Nobre et al., *Biol Psychol* (2008); Hayashi et al., *Nutrients* (2021); Lyon et al., *Alt Med Rev* (2011); NHS Menopause Guidance (2024); Barkley & Ramsay, *ADHD in Adults* (2023); CDC ADHD Data (2024).

### **Want More Support?**

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Contact for more information on ADHD coaching, tutoring, courses, and speaking availability.

