

Basic Facts About Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- ▶ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** is a common neurobiological (biological study of the nervous system) condition affecting 5–8% of school-age children and 4% of adults.
- ▶ There are three major subtypes of ADHD:
 - **Primarily Inattentive.** Person mainly has difficulties with paying attention, organization, and follow-through.
 - **Primarily Hyperactive/Impulsive.** Person mainly has difficulties with impulse control, being very restless, being very active, speaking or acting before thinking, and self-control.
 - **Combined.** Person mainly has symptoms of inattention, impulsivity, and restlessness.
- ▶ These difficulties usually begin before the person is 7 years old.
- ▶ Additional symptoms include
 - 1) excessive distractibility,
 - 2) excessive and chronic procrastination,
 - 3) difficulty getting started on tasks,
 - 4) not listening when spoken to directly,
 - 5) difficulty completing tasks,
 - 6) frequently losing things,
 - 7) poor planning,
 - 8) poor time management skills,
 - 9) excessive forgetfulness,
 - 10) blurts out answers before questions have been completed,
 - 11) difficulty awaiting turn,
 - 12) interrupting or intruding on others,
 - 13) difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or social activities,
 - 14) fidgeting with hands or feet, or squirms, and
 - 15) talks excessively.
- ▶ Not every person with ADHD has all of the symptoms or experiences the same level of severity or impairment.
- ▶ In most cases, ADHD is inherited and tends to run in some families more than other families.
- ▶ There is no cure for ADHD.
- ▶ ADHD is a lifelong condition, affects both males and females, and people of all races and cultural backgrounds.
- ▶ ADHD can appear anywhere in a continuum from mild to severe, resulting in significant impairments.
- ▶ Brain researchers believe that people with ADHD do not have enough of certain chemicals called neurotransmitters that control the brain.
- ▶ Symptoms persist into adulthood in as many as 60% of children with ADHD.
- ▶ Adult ADHD symptoms often coexist with other mental and emotional disorders, such as depression, mood or anxiety disorders, and can significantly impair a person's ability to function productively.
- ▶ ADHD can also co-exist (comorbidity) with Learning Disabilities, Oppositional Defiant Conduct Disorder, and Tourette's Syndrome.
- ▶ There is no quick or easy treatment for ADHD, but the symptoms can be managed.
- ▶ There is no single medical, physical, or genetic test for ADHD and it can be difficult to diagnose.
- ▶ After being aware of the above symptoms, an accurate diagnosis by a trained professional is the first step to effectively managing ADHD.
- ▶ An up-to-date physical examination is recommended to rule out medical causes such as thyroid problems and seizure disorders that resemble ADHD symptoms.
- ▶ An ADHD diagnosis can be determined by the testing professional based on the number and severity of symptoms, how long the symptoms have been present, and the degree to which these symptoms cause impairment in school, work, home, and social situations.

- Licensed, experienced mental health professionals, clinical psychologists, medical doctors, or clinical social workers can administer ADHD testing.
- Physicians can recommend qualified diagnostic testing professionals. University-based hospitals, a medical school, or a graduate school program in psychology are also possibilities where testing can take place.
- Being successful in school and work requires paying attention, controlling behavior, and controlling impulses. Often these are the most difficult tasks for an adult with ADHD.
- Adults with ADHD may have 1) a history of poorer educational performance and underachievement, 2) more frequent school disciplinary actions, 3) repeated a grade in school, 4) dropped out of school, 5) changed employers frequently after performing poorly at work, 6) had a lower socioeconomic status, 7) used illegal substances and smoked cigarettes more frequently, 8) had more marital problems and multiple marriages, and 9) had a higher incidence of separation and divorce.



Do You Have Problems with Attention and Distractibility?

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