

What is ADHD?

ADHD (**attention-deficit / hyperactivity disorder**) is a disorder that affects a person’s ability to pay attention and control impulsive behaviors. As the name implies, the symptoms of ADHD are organised into two categories: *inattention* and *hyperactivity / impulsivity*.

Inattention	Hyperactivity / Impulsivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ has difficulty staying focused on activities ✓ forgetful of tasks (e.g. homework, paying bills) ✓ misses small details / makes careless mistakes ✓ avoids mentally demanding tasks ✓ often loses things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ constantly moving or “on the go” ✓ has difficulty sitting still ✓ excessively talkative ✓ has difficulty with quiet tasks ✓ often speaks out of turn / interrupts

Note: *Everyone* will occasionally experience symptoms similar to those of ADHD. We all forget things, and sometimes work is just plain boring. That’s normal. When a professional diagnoses ADHD, they must also consider the intensity, frequency, and consequences of symptoms.

What does ADHD really look like?

During **childhood**, ADHD can be misinterpreted as intentionally “bad” behavior. Children with ADHD struggle to pay attention during school, and they frequently get in trouble for talking or getting out of the chairs. Oftentimes, even peers become frustrated by these behaviors, which can lead to isolation

During **adulthood**, ADHD can damage careers, relationships, and self-esteem. Inattention symptoms can lead to forgotten responsibilities, poor organization, and difficulty completing tasks. Hyperactivity symptoms manifest as thrill seeking, a high need for stimulation, impulsive decision-making.

Biological Basis

Some people incorrectly believe that ADHD is made up of to serve as an excuse for poor behavior. However, we know that ADHD has a very real biological basis. For example, people with ADHD have structural difference in their brains, most notably in an area that’s responsible for impulse control.

We also know that genetics play a role: A person is much more likely to develop ADHD if their parents have the disorder. Some environmental factors also play a role, but to a lesser extent than heredity.

Treatment

Although there's no cure for ADHD, both children and adults can learn to manage their symptoms with medication and psychotherapy. Additionally, some children will simply outgrow ADHD with time.

Psychotherapy	Medication
Therapy for ADHD typically focuses on identifying strengths and weaknesses, skill building, and education about ways to reduce the intensity of symptoms. It can be invaluable to work with a therapist to learn personalized coping skills	Although medication cannot cure ADHD, an effective treatment can help both children and adults with symptoms management. The most common medications for ADHD are stimulants.

Reference: 2015 Therapist Aid LLC; Provided by TherapistAid.com