



Does Your 1 in 4 Have AD/HD?



While the condition is most often associated with children, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) can continue into adulthood for many individuals; and there are some adults who may not even know that they have the disorder. Adults who are living with the condition, and especially those who are undiagnosed and untreated, may be experiencing a number of problems, some of which stem directly from the disorder and others that are the result of associated adjustment patterns.



Symptoms of an adult with ADHD may include:

- Distractibility
- Disorganization
- Forgetfulness
- Procrastination
- Chronic lateness
- Chronic boredom
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Mood swings
- Employment problems
- Restlessness
- Substance abuse or addictions
- Relationship problems



The symptoms of ADHD can be variable and situational, or constant. Some people with ADHD can concentrate if they are interested or excited, while others have difficulty concentrating under any circumstances. Some avidly seek stimulation, while others avoid it. Some become oppositional, ill-behaved and, later, antisocial; others may become ardent people-pleasers. Some are outgoing, and others, withdrawn.

What Causes ADHD?

The exact cause or causes of ADHD are not conclusively known. Scientific evidence suggests that in many cases the disorder is genetically transmitted and is caused by an imbalance or deficiency in certain chemicals that regulate the efficiency with which the brain controls behavior.

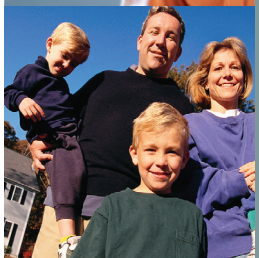
Some studies suggest a potential link to environmental factors, dietary factors such as food additives or sugar, and inner-ear problems or "visual motor" difficulties as causes of ADHD.

The Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults

A multi-factored evaluation of an individual is important in the diagnosis of ADHD. Diagnostic assessment of adults should be made by a licensed mental health professional and the assessment should look for the presence of lifelong patterns of behavior that indicate underlying attention and impulse problems.

ADHD with hyperactivity is characterized by symptoms of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity which have an onset before age seven, which persist for at least six months, and which are not due primarily to other psychiatric disorders or environmental circumstance, such as reaction to family stresses.

The primary characteristic of ADHD without hyperactivity is significant inattentiveness. Studies of children with this diagnosis indicate that they show more signs of anxiety and learning problems, and qualitatively different inattention.



do more for 1 in 4



Why Identify ADHD In Adults?

Identification of adults who have ADHD and appropriate management of their educational, personal and social development improves their chances for a successful outcome. Effective intervention can improve self-esteem, work performance, skills and educational achievement.

A proper diagnosis of ADHD can help an adult put his or her difficulties into perspective. These individuals have often developed low self-esteem and negative perceptions of themselves as a result of cumulative academic, social and vocational failures.

After Diagnosis

The methods of treatment supported by professionals may include a combination of education for the adult and his or her family and close friends, educational/employment accommodations, medication, and psychotherapy. Appropriate treatment is determined according to the severity of an individual's disorder and the type and number of associated problems.

Some tips that adults with ADHD have found useful include:

- **Use internal structure** like date books, lists, notes to oneself, color coding, routines, reminders and files.
- **Choose "good addictions,"** for example, select exercise or other healthy activities for a regular structured "blow-out" time.
- **Set up a rewarding environment** by designing projects, tasks, etc. to minimize or eliminate frustration. Break large tasks into smaller ones; prioritize.
- **Use "time-outs"** to calm down and regain perspective when upset, overwhelmed or angry. Walk away from a situation if needed.
- **Use humor.** It's useful if partners and colleagues are constantly providing an aggressive push to help one stay on track as long as it's done with humor and sensitivity. Learn to view symptoms of ADHD with humor and to joke with close friends and relatives about symptoms such as getting lost, forgetfulness, etc.
- **Become educated and an educator.** Read books. Talk to professionals. Talk to other adults who have ADHD. Let people who matter know about personal strengths and weaknesses related to ADHD. Be an advocate.

Other Resources

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD)

Phone Number: (301) 306-7070

Toll-Free Number: (800) 233-4050

Website URL: www.chadd.org

National Institute of Mental Health

Phone Number: (301) 443-4513

Toll Free Number: 1-866-615-6464

Website URL: www.nimh.nih.gov