

# ADHD in ADULTS

A Practical Guide for the Newly Diagnosed



What Is  
ADHD?

Diagnosis  
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in Adults

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Resources  
and  
Glossary

# ADHD <sup>in</sup> ADULTS

## A Practical Guide for the Newly Diagnosed

**Y**ou might have a lot of questions about **attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**. This guide is meant to help you better understand ADHD by addressing specific questions such as:

- What is ADHD?
- What causes ADHD?
- What are the symptoms of ADHD in adults?
- What are the next steps after an ADHD diagnosis?
- How is ADHD managed?
- What should I expect living with ADHD?

The material in this booklet is NOT intended to replace any information that your healthcare professional provides about your condition. Always remember, be sure to discuss any concerns or questions about ADHD with your healthcare professional.



### **attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder<sup>1</sup>**

*A neurodevelopmental disorder that is marked especially by persistent symptoms of inattention (such as distractibility, forgetfulness, or disorganization) or by symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity (such as fidgeting, speaking out of turn, or restlessness) or by symptoms of all three.*

# ADHD in ADULTS

A Practical Guide for the Newly Diagnosed

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# What Is ADHD?

# What Is ADHD?



**A**ttention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)<sup>1</sup> is a brain-based **medical condition**.

The symptoms of ADHD can occur 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and can interfere with different aspects of your life, including school, work, and social life.

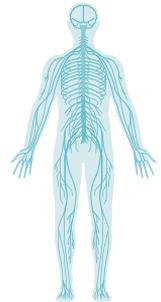
- ADHD is a **neurodevelopmental** disorder that is “characterized by a persistent pattern of **inattention** and/or **hyperactivity/impulsivity** that interferes with functioning or development.”<sup>7</sup>
- There are three types of ADHD
  - 1 Inattentive (mostly inattentive symptoms)
  - 2 Hyperactive-impulsive (mostly hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms)
  - 3 Combined (both inattentive and hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms).

Section 2 of this booklet talks about inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity symptoms in more detail.



## **medical condition**<sup>2</sup>

*A condition that requires medical attention or treatment.*



## **neurodevelopmental**<sup>3</sup>

*Having to do with the development of the nervous system.*



## **inattention**<sup>4</sup>

*Failure to pay attention.*

## **hyperactivity**<sup>5</sup>

*Higher levels of movement or activity that are considered excessive.*

## **impulsivity**<sup>6</sup>

*Prone to act on an impulse.*

# What Is ADHD?

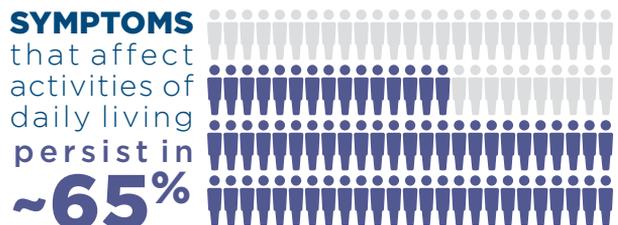
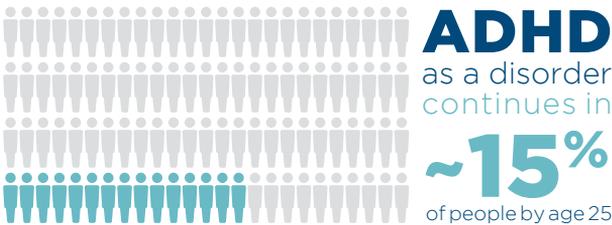
- ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders in children, affecting a child’s nervous system and brain as they grow.<sup>8-10</sup> While “adult” ADHD is diagnosed in individuals over age 17 years, the symptoms are sometimes partly expressed in childhood, but not diagnosed, and continue into adulthood.<sup>11</sup>
- ADHD is a **chronic**, but waxing and waning, disorder with periods of full **remission** that are more often temporary than sustained.<sup>14</sup> Roughly two-thirds of children with ADHD continue to have impairing symptoms of ADHD into adulthood.<sup>14</sup>
- ADHD as a disorder continues in ~15% of people by age 25 years; symptoms that affect activities of daily living persist in ~65%.<sup>10, 15</sup> Section 3 of this booklet talks about who has ADHD in more detail.
- ADHD symptoms in adults may differ from those in children. Inattention symptoms are more likely to continue and decline more slowly with age, while symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity may decrease with age.



**chronic**<sup>12</sup>  
*Continuing or occurring again and again for a long time.*



**remission**<sup>13</sup>  
*A period of time during which a person gets relief from symptoms.*



# What Is ADHD?

- ADHD is a highly persistent disorder, and the negative impact on a person's ability to carry out daily activities, as shown in the figure below, or the continued presence of three or fewer impairing symptoms often continues beyond childhood.<sup>10</sup> The effects of ADHD in adults vary, but ADHD can impact education, job performance, income, marriage and family relationships, and social interactions, even when a person no longer meets all of the requirements for a diagnosis of ADHD.<sup>10</sup>



Illustration based on data in Jain R, et al. *Prim Care Companion CNS Disord.* 2017;19(5):17nr02153.

- Your healthcare provider may use a variety of tests to determine if you have ADHD. Section 2 of this booklet talks about how ADHD is diagnosed in more detail.
- ADHD can be challenging to diagnose in adults. People with ADHD may not receive an accurate diagnosis and therefore may not receive appropriate treatment. Section 4 of this booklet talks about ADHD treatment in more detail.



# What Is ADHD?

## What Are the Symptoms of ADHD in Adults?

Many people know about the symptoms of ADHD in children, for example, being overly active or having problems focusing on schoolwork. In adults with ADHD, however, the symptoms may be different, and many adults with ADHD don't know they have it—though they know they have difficulties with everyday tasks. For example, adults with ADHD may find it difficult to focus and prioritize, miss deadlines, and forget meetings or social plans.

ADHD in adults begins in childhood but it may not be diagnosed until you are an adult.<sup>11,16</sup> This may lead to challenges that can include losing a job because of inability to complete projects, issues in a marriage, financial debt because of impulsive spending, or difficulties in school due to failing grades.<sup>9</sup> These outcomes are described in more detail in Section 4.



# What Is ADHD?

## What Causes ADHD?

ADHD is a complex condition, and we don't know what exactly causes it. ADHD is thought to result from an interaction of several factors, and not one single thing causes ADHD.

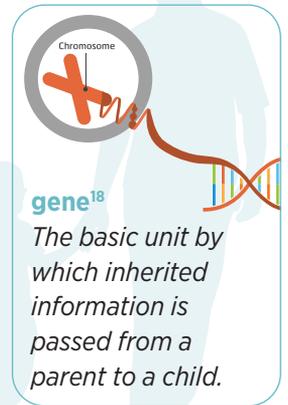
## Brain Structure and Function

The brain structure and brain function of individuals with ADHD differ from people without ADHD.<sup>17</sup>

## Genes

**Genes** influence the development of ADHD.<sup>10</sup>

- There is no single gene that causes ADHD, rather, genetic factors in combination with environmental factors likely form risk factors for developing the disorder.<sup>17</sup>
- ADHD runs in families. Of families that have a child with ADHD, 41-55% also have at least one parent with ADHD.<sup>19, 20</sup>
- Parents and siblings of people with ADHD have an increased risk of developing ADHD compared with the general population.<sup>10</sup>
- One out of four individuals with ADHD is likely to have a parent, sibling, grandparent, uncle, or aunt with ADHD.<sup>17</sup>



# What Is ADHD?

## Other Risk Factors for ADHD

Exposure to certain substances during pregnancy or when a child is very young may be associated with an increased risk of ADHD.

Risk factors during pregnancy include exposure to:<sup>21</sup>

- Tobacco, alcohol, and drugs
- Certain medications
- Methylmercury from mother's fish consumption<sup>17</sup>

Other risk factors during pregnancy include the mother's high blood pressure, a low vitamin D level, and stress, as well as early (pre-term) birth and lack of oxygen during birth.<sup>17, 22</sup>

Low birth weight and brain injuries may also increase the risk of a child developing ADHD.<sup>17</sup>



# What Is ADHD?

Some factors in the environment are believed to increase the risk of ADHD. Just like with genes, however, no single cause can explain all cases of ADHD.<sup>9</sup>

Environmental factors that may contribute to the risk of developing ADHD include:

- Exposure to **environmental toxins**, especially lead, at a young age<sup>21, 24</sup>
- Poor nutrition and limited human contact for children<sup>17</sup>



## **environmental toxin**<sup>23</sup>

*A small amount of a poison that is found in the air, water, food, etc.*



# What Is ADHD?

## Comorbidities in Patients with ADHD

Adults with ADHD often have at least one coexisting medical or **psychiatric condition** that are more common in people with ADHD (more than 50%) compared to the general population (less than 10%).<sup>27</sup>

- In a Swedish study, more than half of adults with ADHD had at least one comorbid condition such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, and/or conduct/behavioral disorders.<sup>28</sup>
- Studies from Japan and Sweden show that adults with ADHD often have comorbid medical conditions such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes, and ADHD may also increase the risk of obesity, asthma, and sleep disorders.<sup>29, 30</sup>
- It is more challenging to get a clear ADHD diagnosis in the presence of other conditions.
- Your healthcare provider will take into account all of your symptoms and determine the best treatment plan.

There are many options for treating ADHD, including pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments. Your healthcare provider will work with you to create a treatment plan that is right for you. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.

### comorbidity<sup>25</sup>

*A medical condition that exists simultaneously with, and usually independently of, another medical condition.*



### psychiatric condition<sup>26</sup>

*A mental condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood and can impact day-to-day living and the ability to relate to others.*



# What Is ADHD?

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Diagnosis  
of ADHD in  
Adults

# Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults



## The Challenges of Diagnosing ADHD in Adults

Now that your healthcare provider has determined that you have ADHD, you may have realized that making a diagnosis of ADHD in adults can be complicated and challenging.

The symptoms of ADHD are common; what makes these symptoms different in people with ADHD is that they are persistent and affect day-to-day life.<sup>1</sup>

- Symptoms can range from mild to severe. For example, a lack of impulse control can manifest as impatience while waiting in line or driving in traffic, as well as mood swings and angry outbursts.<sup>2</sup>
- While some adults may have fewer symptoms as they age, others continue to have symptoms that interfere with their daily activities.<sup>2</sup>
- Over the years, adults may learn how to compensate for many of their ADHD symptoms. For example, they may rely on lists, use alarms on their smartphones, work longer hours, check things multiple times, etc.
- Adults often have additional psychiatric conditions (defined in Section 1) with symptoms that are similar to the symptoms of ADHD.<sup>3</sup>



# Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults

## How Is ADHD in Adults Diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider most likely used a thorough process and tools to gather information from different sources to diagnose your ADHD. The process may include the following:

- **Clinical assessment** and their experience evaluating other individuals with ADHD.
- Tests that take into account your ADHD symptoms and their impact on your everyday activities.
- A thorough medical history.
- Questions about your work experiences, family life, and social experiences currently and as a child and in school. It is important to understand the challenges you have right now in your daily life.
- They may have asked to speak with someone who knows you well such as a spouse, sibling, or good friend.
- Your healthcare provider also had to rule out other causes of your symptoms, for example, learning disabilities or mood disorders, in order to be sure that you have ADHD.



**clinical assessment<sup>4</sup>**  
*Assessments of a person's physical condition and behavior that are used in order to determine a diagnosis and treatment plan.*



# Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) requirements to make a diagnosis of ADHD in people age 17 years or older are shown below.<sup>5</sup>



**5 or more** symptoms in the  
**inattention category**

and/or

**5 or more** symptoms in the  
**hyperactivity/impulsivity category**

- Symptoms have lasted at least 6 months
- Symptoms were present before age 12 years
- Symptoms are present in two or more settings (for example, work and home)
- Symptoms interfere with quality of life, social, work, or academic functioning
- Symptoms cannot be attributed to another psychiatric condition<sup>5</sup>

## Symptoms of Inattention<sup>6</sup>

Does not pay close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, at work, or with other activities.

Has trouble focusing attention on tasks.

Appears not to listen when spoken to directly.

Does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or work-related duties.

Has trouble organizing tasks and activities.

Avoids/dislikes/is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period of time.

Loses items necessary for tasks and activities (e.g., tools, wallets, keys, eyeglasses, cell phones).

Is easily distracted.

Is forgetful in daily activities.

## Symptoms of Hyperactivity/Impulsivity<sup>6</sup>

Fidgets with or taps hands or feet, or squirms in seat.

Leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected.

Feels restless.

Unable to quietly participate in leisure activities.

Is “on the go” acting as if “driven by a motor”

Talks excessively.

Blurts out answers before questions are completed.

Has trouble waiting his/her turn.

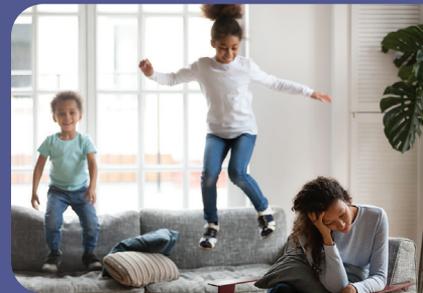
Interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games).

# Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults

## What Does ADHD Mean to Me and My Family?

Before receiving a diagnosis, people with ADHD and those around them might not understand why they have problems with school, jobs, friends, or family and the reasons for their unpredictable or irresponsible behavior.<sup>7</sup> Once they are diagnosed, patients who receive appropriate treatment, including medication and coping strategies, often report doing better in many areas of their lives.<sup>7</sup>

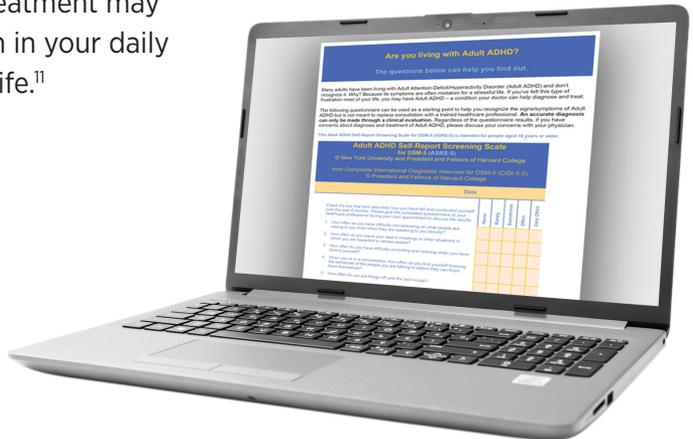
ADHD runs in families, meaning that genes likely play a role in the development of many ADHD cases.<sup>8</sup> This means, someone else in your family, a sibling, a parent, a grandparent, a cousin, or a nephew may also be diagnosed with ADHD. Parents and siblings of people with ADHD have an increased risk of developing ADHD compared with the general population.<sup>9</sup>



# Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults

If there is someone else in your family who thinks they have ADHD, they might want to complete an online screen at [https://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/ncs/ftpd/ahd/ASRS-5\\_English.pdf](https://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/ncs/ftpd/ahd/ASRS-5_English.pdf) and seek the advice of a trained healthcare practitioner who has experience with ADHD.

Now that you have been diagnosed with ADHD, you have completed the first step in getting treatment.<sup>10</sup> Your healthcare provider will work with you to identify the areas of your life that have been most affected by ADHD and develop a treatment plan that may include medication, behavior, or changes to your work and home environment to reduce the negative impact of ADHD symptoms. Treatment may improve your ability to function in your daily life and your overall quality of life.<sup>11</sup>



# Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults

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Who Else  
Has ADHD?

# Who Else Has ADHD?



## ADHD in Adults in the US

It's estimated that 9.4% of children between ages 2 and 17 years in the US have or have had a diagnosis of ADHD.<sup>1,2</sup> While ADHD begins in childhood, some people are not diagnosed until they are adults. The diagnoses of ADHD are increasing among adults of every race/ethnicity in the US.<sup>3</sup> This may reflect increased awareness of ADHD in adults by both healthcare providers and the public.<sup>3</sup>

Based on a study of a large number of residents within a healthcare system in a specific region in the US, ADHD diagnosis among adults in the US increased over four times faster than among children between 2007 and 2016.<sup>3</sup>

- Cases of childhood ADHD increased by 26.4% compared to 123.3% among adults.
- Even though the number of adults diagnosed with ADHD is increasing, most scientists believe that ADHD is underdiagnosed in adults compared to children.<sup>4</sup>

### Cases of childhood ADHD increased by 26.4% compared to 123.3% among adults

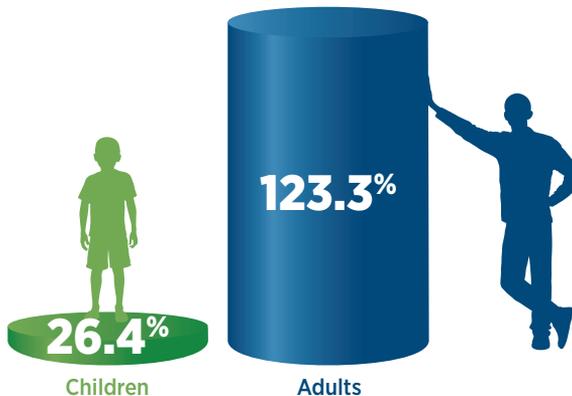


Illustration based on data in Chung W, et al. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2019;2(11):e1914344

# Who Else Has ADHD?

About 10 million adults in the US currently have ADHD.<sup>5</sup>

- Estimates vary among adults age 18-44 years.
  - US: 4.4%<sup>6</sup>
  - World Health Organization survey of 11 countries: 3.2%<sup>7</sup>
  - World Health Organization survey of 20 countries: 2.8%<sup>8</sup>
- Estimates in adults over age 50 also vary:
  - Netherlands: 2.8%<sup>9</sup>
  - Germany: 4.7%<sup>10</sup>

However, less than 20% of adults see psychiatrists or seek treatment for their ADHD.<sup>4</sup>

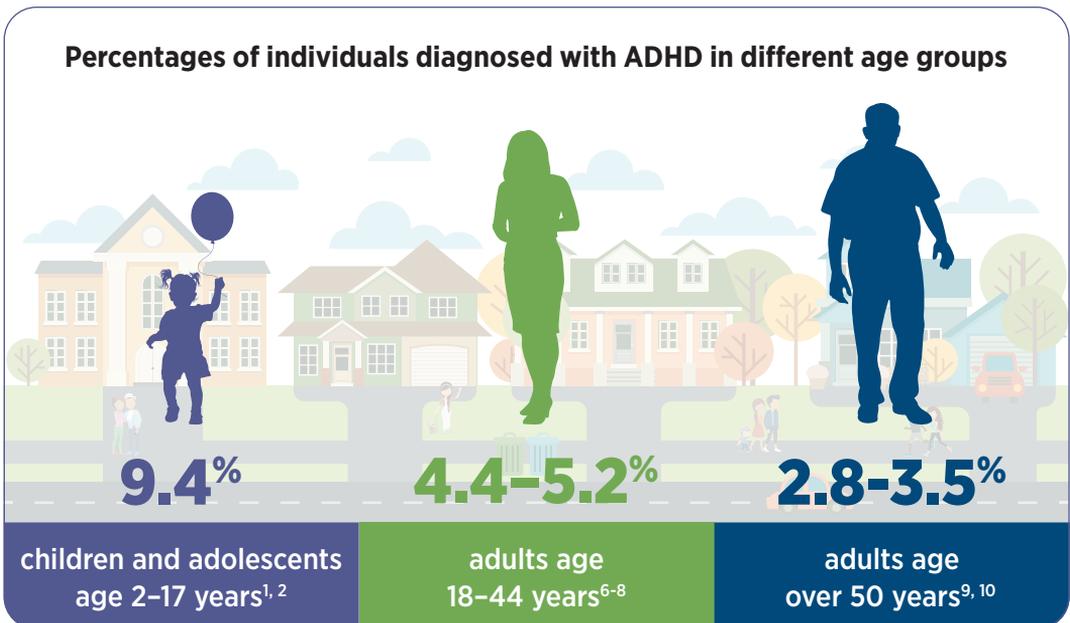


Illustration based on data in CDC. Data and Statistics About ADHD. 2020; Danielson ML, et al. *J Clin Child Adolesc Psychol.* 2018;47(2):199-212; Chung W, et al. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2019;2(11):e1914344; Ginsberg Y, et al. *Prim Care Companion CNS Disord.* 2014;16(3):PCC.13r01600; CHADD. ADHD for Adults. 2021; Kessler RC, et al. *Am J Psychiatry.* 2006;163(4):716-23; Fayyad J, et al. *Br J Psychiatry.* 2007;190:402-9; Fayyad J, et al. *Atten Defic Hyperact Disord.* 2017;9(1):47-65; Michielsen M, et al. *Br J Psychiatry.* 2012;201(4):298-305; de Zwaan M, et al. *Eur Arch Psychiatry Clin Neurosci.* 2012;262(1):79-86.

# Who Else Has ADHD?

## ADHD in Adults and Gender

ADHD symptoms can be different in men and women and may contribute to women not getting the correct ADHD diagnosis.<sup>11</sup> A consensus review of the literature by UK ADHD specialists and an analysis of a US population database that examined how to improve identifying and treating ADHD in women and girls found the following:

- While ADHD is more often diagnosed in boys than in girls, in adults the rates are similar in men and women.<sup>11, 12</sup>
- Women are more likely to show symptoms of inattention, while men may be more impulsive or hyperactive. This is true for both children and adults.<sup>11, 13, 14</sup>
- Women tend to have anxiety, depression, and eating disorders, while men tend to exhibit impulse control disorders or behavioral disorders.<sup>11</sup>
- The types of risky behaviors associated with ADHD, for example, substance abuse, are similar for men and women.<sup>15</sup>



### Likely symptoms and co-existing conditions in women

inattention  
anxiety  
depression  
eating disorders  
substance abuse



### Likely symptoms and co-existing conditions in men

impulsive  
hyperactive  
impulse control disorders  
behavioral disorders  
substance abuse

# Who Else Has ADHD?

## ADHD in Adults and Race/Ethnicity

The number of cases of ADHD reported per year in the US varies among different racial and ethnic groups. It's not clear if this is because ADHD is more common in some groups than in others or because it is diagnosed more often in some groups and less often diagnosed in others. Most studies show ADHD rates are higher among the non-Hispanic White population than the Black or Hispanic populations and lowest among the Asian population. However, recent studies suggest that the Black population may actually be at higher risk for ADHD than the general population, but they are likely underdiagnosed compared to the non-Hispanic White and Asian populations.<sup>3, 16, 17</sup>



# Who Else Has ADHD?

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# After the Diagnosis

# After the Diagnosis



There are many approaches to the management of ADHD. Depending on your specific symptoms and treatment goals, your healthcare provider will work with you to develop a treatment plan to help manage your ADHD symptoms. Cognitive behavior therapy, counseling, non-prescription treatments, and prescription medicines are commonly used in treating ADHD symptoms.

## Why Is It Important to Treat ADHD?

If untreated, your ADHD may impact your performance in school or work; your risk of having an accident; your relationships with friends, family, and co-workers; and your overall health.<sup>1</sup>



# After the Diagnosis

If ADHD is untreated, adults:

- Often have symptoms that create difficulties at work and in their personal and family lives.
- Have problems with memory and completing tasks, which, along with other symptoms, may lead to inconsistent performance at work.<sup>2</sup>
- May have chronic feelings of frustration, guilt, or blame.

Untreated ADHD can impact impulsive decision-making/  
risk-taking:

- ADHD can increase the risk of violent and criminal behavior, injuries, motor vehicle accidents, substance use, and death.<sup>2</sup>

Persistent ADHD may reduce a person's life expectancy by nearly 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

Even when treated, ADHD can impact all aspects of day-to-day living.



# After the Diagnosis

## Treating ADHD in Adults

There are many effective treatment options to help you manage your ADHD. The table below lists ADHD treatment options that don't involve medications as well as medications that are approved in the US to treat ADHD. Non-medication treatments and medications are defined and described in more detail later in this section.

### Non-medication Treatments for ADHD in Adults

- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Psychoeducation
- Mindfulness
- ADHD coaches
- College and work accommodations

### Medications Approved for Treating ADHD in Adults

**Stimulants**  
Methylphenidate  
Amphetamine

**Non-stimulants**



Commonly prescribed stimulants like amphetamines and methylphenidates are federally controlled substances because they can be abused or lead to dependence.

**Long-acting** forms of these drugs are usually preferred over **short-acting** forms.<sup>4-6</sup>

Experts recommend everyday treatment of ADHD.<sup>7</sup>



#### **long-acting<sup>3</sup>**

*Medications that work in phases to treat symptoms throughout the day.*

#### **short-acting<sup>3</sup>**

*Medications that start working quickly after taking them. The effects wear off after a few hours.*

# After the Diagnosis

Your primary care provider may refer you to a specialist (psychiatrist or a psychologist). Together they will work to determine how to best manage your symptoms. Your healthcare provider will also work with you to determine the best treatment plan for your individual situation. In the case of medication, this may involve finding a medication that works best for you to help manage your ADHD symptoms.

Adults with ADHD who are treated report benefits in lifelong outcomes in many areas of daily life.<sup>1</sup>

## Non-medication Interventions

Behavioral therapies include **cognitive behavioral therapy**. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps you to develop a more mindful and structured approach to thinking and behaving. This can be done individually or with a group.<sup>5,6</sup>



### **cognitive behavioral therapy<sup>8</sup>**

*A treatment option that can help reduce behaviors that can be disruptive to others. Behavior therapy seeks to strengthen positive behaviors and replace unwanted or problem behaviors.*



# After the Diagnosis

**Psychoeducation** conveys education to you and your family members to help you understand ADHD and also to help you participate in managing ADHD symptoms. This approach can include working with an ADHD coach who is specially trained to help adults (and teens and children) with ADHD better manage their lives and achieve their goals.

- A good coach can help you to develop planning and management skills, healthier self-esteem and relationships, clearer judgment, and self-motivation.<sup>10</sup>
- Your healthcare provider might recommend a coach, or you can search the ADHD Coaches Organization (ACO) List of Professional ADHD Coaches. The ACO screens coaches on their list to make sure they have the proper training.<sup>10</sup>

College and work accommodations can be developed for individual situations.

- Accommodations for students may include extra time for testing, permission to record lectures, written instructions from professors, and help with scheduling to maintain a reasonable course load.<sup>11</sup>



## **psychoeducation<sup>9</sup>**

*The process of providing information about a psychological condition to patients and family members to help them understand the disease and its management so that they can be active participants in their treatment decisions.*

# After the Diagnosis

Examples of workplace accommodations include:

- Flexible scheduling and work-from-home options
- Written directions
- Email follow-up to conversations
- Allowing audio recordings for meetings to increase attention and participation, and to minimize distractions from note taking
- Quiet spaces for work, including offices with doors that close or use of empty conference rooms
- Cubicles with high walls or desk space to decrease distractions
- White noise machines to block distracting sounds
- Breaking large assignments or projects into smaller units with individual target dates



# After the Diagnosis

## Organizations with helpful information and resources for people with ADHD

The Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)

[www.add.org](http://www.add.org)



Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

[www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)



The Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

[www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)  
800-526-7234



ADA National Network

[www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)  
800-949-4232



Section 5 of this booklet lists other resources and organizations that provide support for people with ADHD.

# After the Diagnosis

## Medications for Treating ADHD

Medication regimens vary by individual needs, based upon the patient's symptoms and the management of side effects (defined later in this section). Some patients may require medications to work longer, while others may need them to work for shorter periods of time.<sup>12</sup>

- Medications can help manage your ADHD symptoms, but they don't cure ADHD.
- The table on page 35 lists the types of medications that are available to treat ADHD and the forms in which they can be given.
- These medications are classified as either **stimulants** or **non-stimulants**. There are two types of stimulants: **methylphenidate** and **amphetamine**.
- Your individual situation might influence the form that is best for you. Long-acting medications are usually preferred.

# After the Diagnosis



Commonly prescribed stimulants like amphetamines and methylphenidates are federally controlled substances because they can be abused or lead to dependence.

## **stimulant**<sup>13, 14</sup>

*Prescription medicines that are used to treat ADHD. Stimulants may help increase alertness and attention. Despite their name, stimulants actually have a calming effect on individuals with ADHD who exhibit hyperactivity. They increase the levels of brain chemicals. One of these chemicals, **dopamine**, is associated with motivation, attention, and movement.*

## **dopamine**<sup>15</sup>

*A chemical made in the brain that carries messages between nerve cells and is involved in many brain activities, including movement and emotion.*

## **non-stimulant**<sup>16</sup>

*Medications that work by increasing the activity of a chemical in the brain that is linked to attention.*

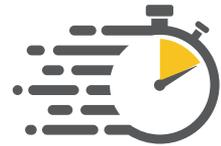
## **methylphenidate**<sup>17</sup> and **amphetamine**<sup>18</sup>

*Types of stimulant drugs used to treat ADHD.*

# After the Diagnosis

## Stimulants

- They are the most often used and the best-known types of ADHD medications.<sup>19</sup> These medications are available in **immediate-release (IR)** and **extended-release (ER)** forms. The effects of IR medications last for shorter periods and those of ER medications last longer. Some stimulants are available in combination forms that after taking help to reduce ADHD symptoms quicker and decrease symptoms longer throughout the day.
- Stimulants work quickly.<sup>19</sup> Some take effect within 30 minutes of taking the dose. Others take effect after 60 to 90 minutes.<sup>22</sup>
- Many people with ADHD respond to stimulants, and it's estimated that between 65% and 75% of adults have fewer ADHD symptoms when they take stimulant medications.<sup>19, 22-24</sup>
- The most common **side effects** with stimulants include, sleep problems, decreased appetite, weight loss, increased blood pressure, fast heart rate, dizziness, headaches and stomachaches, rebound, moodiness and irritability, and nervousness.<sup>24</sup>



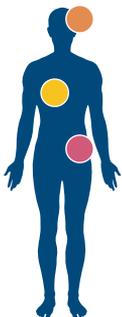
### **immediate-release (IR)**<sup>20</sup>

*Medications that release most of the drug into the bloodstream quickly.*



### **extended-release (ER)**<sup>21</sup>

*Medications that release the drug into the bloodstream slowly over time.*



### **side effect**<sup>25</sup>

*A secondary and usually unwanted effect of a drug.*

# After the Diagnosis

## Non-stimulants

- Non-stimulants do not work as quickly as stimulants, which means that when you first begin taking them, you may not notice any effects for a week or two, but their effect can last up to 24 hours.<sup>22</sup>
- Non-stimulants can be combined with stimulants or used alone when patients develop side effects that cause them to stop taking stimulants (e.g., patients with heart disease or substance use disorder).<sup>22</sup>
- Common side effects of non-stimulants include nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and dizziness.<sup>26</sup>

## Types of medications to treat ADHD in adults<sup>26-29</sup>

Medication type	Form available
<b>Stimulants</b>	
<b>Methylphenidate</b>	
Short-acting	 tablet  chewable tablet  liquid
Intermediate-acting	 tablet
Long-acting	 capsule  tablet  skin patch  chewable tablet  liquid
<b>Amphetamine</b>	
Short-acting	 tablet  liquid
Long-acting	 capsule  tablet  liquid
<b>Non-stimulants</b>	
Long-acting	 capsule
Long-acting	 tablet

# After the Diagnosis

Although ADHD is a long-term condition, the good news is that with the right treatment, it can be managed and treatment may improve your symptoms.



# After the Diagnosis

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# Resources and Glossary

# Resources and Glossary



A variety of resources are available to help you manage your ADHD. The resources below are arranged alphabetically.

## **ADDitude Magazine**

<https://www.additudemag.com/>

## **ADHD Coaches**

<https://www.adhdcoaches.org/adhd-coaching>

## **ADHD Coaches Organization (ACO)**

<https://www.adhdcoaches.org>

## **ADHD in Adults**

<https://adhdinadults.com>

## **American Professional Society of ADHD & Related Disorders**

<https://apsard.org/>

## **Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance (CADDRA)**

<https://www.caddra.ca/public-information/adults/forms/>

## **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

<https://cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/materials-multimedia/index.html>

## **Children and Adults with ADHA (CHADD)**

<https://chadd.org/for-adults/overview/>

## **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)**

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng87/resources>

## **National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH)**

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd-the-basics/index.shtml>

## **National Resource Center on ADHD**

<https://chadd.org/about/about-nrc/>

## **Recommended Accommodations for College Students with ADHD**

<https://add.org/recommended-accommodations-college-students-adhd>

## **Section 504**

<https://chadd.org/for-parents/section-504/>

# Glossary

**Amphetamine**

A type of stimulant drug that is used to treat ADHD.

**Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder**

A neurodevelopmental disorder that is marked especially by persistent symptoms of inattention (such as distractibility, forgetfulness, or disorganization) or by symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity (such as fidgeting, speaking out of turn, or restlessness) or by symptoms of all three.

**Chronic**

Continuing or occurring again and again for a long time.

**Clinical assessment**

Assessments of a person's physical condition and behavior that are used in order to determine a diagnosis and treatment plan.

**Cognitive behavioral therapy**

A treatment option that can help reduce behaviors that can be disruptive to others. Behavior therapy seeks to strengthen positive behaviors and replace unwanted or problem behaviors.

**Comorbidity**

A medical condition that exists simultaneously with, and usually independently of, another medical condition.

**Dopamine**

A chemical made in the brain that carries messages between nerve cells and is involved in many brain activities, including movement and emotion.

**Environmental toxin**

A small amount of a poison that is found in the air, water, food, etc.

**Extended-release**

Medications that release the drug into the bloodstream slowly over time.

**Gene**

The basic unit by which inherited information is passed from a parent to a child.

**Hyperactivity**

Higher levels of movement or activity that are considered excessive.

# Glossary

**Immediate-release**

Medications that release most of the drug into the bloodstream quickly.

**Impulsivity**

Prone to act on an impulse.

**Inattention**

Failure to pay attention.

**Long-acting**

Medications that work in phases to treat symptoms throughout the day.

**Medical condition**

A condition that requires medical attention or treatment.

**Methylphenidate**

A type of stimulant drug that is used to treat ADHD.

**Neurodevelopmental**

Having to do with the development of the nervous system.

**Non-stimulant**

Medications that work by increasing the activity of a chemical in the brain that is linked to attention.

**Psychiatric condition**

A mental condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood and can impact day-to-day living and the ability to relate to others.

**Psychoeducation**

The process of providing information about a psychological condition to patients and family members to help them understand the disease and its management so that they can be active participants in their treatment decisions.

**Remission**

A period of time during which a person gets relief from symptoms.

**Short-acting**

Medications that start working quickly after taking them. The effects wear off after a few hours.

# Glossary

**Side effect**

A secondary and usually unwanted effect of a drug.

**Stimulant**

Prescription medicines that are used to treat ADHD. Stimulants may help increase alertness and attention. Despite their name, stimulants actually have a calming effect on individuals with ADHD who exhibit hyperactivity. They increase the levels of brain chemicals. One of these chemicals, dopamine, is associated with motivation, attention, and movement.



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