

What is ADD/ADHD?

Definition

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a brain disorder marked by an ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development.

Inattention means a person wanders off task, lacks persistence, has difficulty sustaining focus, and is disorganized; and these problems are not due to defiance or lack of comprehension.

Hyperactivity means a person seems to move about constantly, including situations in which it is not appropriate when it is not appropriate, excessively fidgets, taps, or talks. In adults, it may be extreme restlessness or wearing others out with their activity.

Impulsivity means a person makes hasty actions that occur in the moment without first thinking about them and that may have high potential for harm; or a desire for immediate rewards or inability to delay gratification. An impulsive person may be socially intrusive and excessively interrupt others or make important decisions without considering the long-term consequences.

Signs and Symptoms

Inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity are the key behaviors of ADD/ADHD. Some people with ADD/ADHD only have problems with one of the behaviors, while others have both inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity. Most individuals have the combined type of ADD/ADHD.

It is normal to have some inattention, unfocused motor activity and impulsivity, but for people with ADD/ADHD, these behaviors are more severe, occur more often and or interfere with or reduce the quality of how they function socially, at school, or in a job.

Being Diagnosed with ADD/ADHD- Now What?

It is understandable to have concerns when you have been diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, especially about treatments. It is important to remember that while ADD/ADHD can't be cured, it can be successfully managed. There are many treatment options.

Treatment of ADD/ADHD

In most cases, ADD/ADHD is best treated with a combination of behavior therapy and medication. Good treatment plans will include close monitoring, follow-ups and any changes needed along the way. Following are treatment options for ADD/ADHD:

- Medications
- Behavioral Therapy strategies

Behavioral Therapy

ADD/ADHD affects not only one's ability to pay attention or sit still in academic settings or workplace settings, it also can affect relationships. Behavioral modification therapy is a treatment option that can help reduce these problems and should be started as soon as a diagnosis is made. You can begin yourself by making and instituting some of the following changes. The following are examples that might help:

- **Create a routine.** Try to follow the same general schedule every day, doing routine tasks around the same time each day.
- **Get organized.** Put items such as car keys, wallet, etc. in the same place every day so you will be less likely to misplace them.
- **Use goals and to-do lists.** Make a to-do list every morning for the day, try to limit items to 10 or less, and rank them in order of priority, 1 through 10. Use the list to guide your decisions and activities throughout the day, there are usually tasks people do not enjoy and therefore procrastinate doing, if you know of these tasks you usually procrastinate on, try doing them first to knock them out! It will give you good momentum to keep soaring through your to-do list! Remember: If you don't make it to your Number 10 item by the end of the day, it goes first on the next day's to-do list so it gets done!
- **Use A Calendar.** Use an actual physical calendar to write down important dates, work or school due dates, bill due dates etc. and set a time in your daily routine that you glance at it (maybe in the morning as you make your to-do list).
- **Eliminate distractions.** Try to eliminate multiple distractions in your environment when you are trying to complete tasks. Turn off the TV, radio, and computer, especially when trying to do tasks such as work or schoolwork that require concentration. If you are able to eliminate distractions, you can get your work done quickly and then you are able to have time to relax and fully enjoy those items such as the TV, radio or time on the computer.
- **Break down tasks.** Break down tasks into these 3 simple steps:

- **Break down tasks.** Break down tasks into these 3 simple steps:
 - **1. Get organized.** Get where you need to be and gather supplies needed to complete task.
 - **2. Stay Focused.** Stick with the task and say “no” to distractions.
 - **3. Get it Done!** Finish up, check your work, & clean up.

Medications

Medication can be helpful with treating symptoms of ADD/ADHD. Medication is an option that may help control some of the symptoms that have led to difficulties with daily functioning. Medications have the potential to have interactions, adverse reactions and side effects along with a potential to interact with other prescribed and non-prescribed medications. It is HIGHLY important you keep ALL of your health care providers updated on ALL of your medications so any adverse effects or interactions can be prevented and monitored for.

Several different types of medications may be used to treat ADD/ADHD:

- **Stimulants** are the best-known and most widely used treatments. Between 70-80 percent of patients with ADD/ADHD respond positively to these medications.
- In some cases, **Nonstimulants** have been approved for treating ADD/ADHD. These medications seems to have fewer side effects than stimulants and can last up to 24 hours.

Medications can affect each person differently, where one person may respond well to one medication, but not another. When determining the best treatment, the doctor might try different medications and doses, so it is important to work with and communicate clearly with your doctor to find the medication and or treatment that works best for you.