

ADHD



Foundation

What is ADHD

Occasionally, we may all have difficulty sitting still, paying attention or controlling impulsive behaviour.

But, for some this is pervasive and persistent to the point of interfering with their lives, including home, academic, social and work settings.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological condition affecting 5.9-7.1 of children and adolescents and at least 5% of adults (Willcutt 2012). The Second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health (Young Minds Matter 2015) indicates the percentage is higher than previously thought.

ADHD is characterized by developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity.

ADHD is defined in the DSM-V as a Neurodevelopmental Disorder (APA, 2013).

ADHD is characterised by a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development. ADHD symptoms will have been present from childhood and may be considered as mild, moderate or severe depending on the amount of symptoms and the extent of functional, social or occupational impairment.

ADHD is currently conceptualised as being comprised of three subtypes:

Primarily Inattentive Subtype (PI):

Inattention manifests behaviourally in ADHD as wandering off task, lacking persistence, having difficulty sustaining focus, being disorganised and is not due to defiance or lack of comprehension.

Primarily Hyperactive Impulsive Subtype (HI):

Hyperactivity refers to excessive motor activity when it is not appropriate or excessive fidgeting, tapping or talkativeness. Impulsivity refers to hasty actions that occur in the moment without forethought and that have high potential for harm to the individual. Impulsiveness may also reflect a desire for immediate rewards or an inability to delay gratification. Impulsive behaviours may also manifest in social intrusiveness such as interrupting others and/or making decisions or acting without adequate consideration of the long-term consequences.

Combined Type Subtype (CT):

Individuals with this subtype experience both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms.

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FAQ's

What is a neurodevelopmental disorder?

A condition which usually manifest early in a child's development, often before the child enters primary school, and are characterised by developmental deficits that produce impairments of personal, social, academic, or occupational functioning.

What are the Inattentive Symptoms?

- Fails to give close attention to detail, makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty in sustaining attention in tasks or activities
- Does not appear to listen when spoken to directly
- Often does not follow through on instructions or fails to complete tasks
- Often has difficulties organising tasks and activities
- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort
- Often loses things necessary for tasks or activities
- Is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
- Is often forgetful in daily activities

What are the Hyperactive-Impulsive Symptoms?

- Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet or squirms in seat
- Often leaves seat in situations where remaining in seat is expected
- Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is inappropriate (restlessness in adolescents and adults)
- Often unable to play or engage in leisure activities quietly
- Is often "on the go" acting as if "driven by motor"
- Often talks excessively
- Often blurts out answers before the question has been completed
- Often has difficulty waiting their turn
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others

What is ADD?

It is the old name for the 'predominantly inattentive' subtype. ADD is an old term that was removed from the diagnostic manual in 1994, but it is still in common usage. The correct name for the condition is now Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. This can lead to confusion because hyperactivity is not a symptom that is exhibited by all individuals.

References

- APA. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Willcutt, E. G. (2012). The Prevalence of DSM-IV Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Neurotherapeutics*, 9(3), 490–499. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s13311-012-0135-8>
- Telethon Kids Institute (2015), Report on the Second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health, Young Minds Matter, Chapter 5, <http://youngmindsmatter.org.au/survey-results/overview/>