



NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

ATTENTION-DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

What it is:

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterised by a pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with an individual's functioning or development. The disorder begins in childhood, and several of the symptoms should be present before the age of 12 in order for a diagnosis to be made. Inattention can manifest as not being able to focus on a specific task, being unable to concentrate, and being disorganised. This inattention is not due to a lack of comprehension of the work being done, or due to defiant behaviour. Hyperactivity refers to excessive physical activity when it is not appropriate, or excessive talking or fidgeting. Impulsivity refers to hurried decisions or actions that happen without prior thought, and that could be potentially harmful to the individual. Impulsivity can manifest as social intrusiveness, for example interrupting others when not appropriate, making important decisions without proper consideration of the consequences, or taking part in physical activities which could be potentially dangerous.

The symptoms must be present in more than one setting in order to make a diagnosis, for example at home, at school and in social settings. Individuals with ADHD may also display irritability, an intolerance for frustration and mood swings. The disorder can lead to serious impairment in the individuals academic or work performance.

Common symptoms:

1. Inability to sustain concentration on tasks or play activities
2. Does not pay close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in school work or during other activities
3. Starts tasks but is easily distracted and does not complete tasks
4. Difficulty organising tasks and activities
5. Easily distracted
6. Forgetful in everyday activities
7. Fidgets with hands, taps feet or squirms in seat
8. Difficulty sitting still, often leaves seat in situations that are inappropriate
9. Often runs or jumps around in situations that are inappropriate
10. Talks excessively

11. The individual has difficulty waiting for their turn, or waiting in line
12. The individual constantly interrupts others while they are speaking, cannot wait for their turn to speak



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Mental Health**

Causes:

A history of child abuse or neglect, multiple caregivers, and alcohol or other substance exposure in utero may all be potential risk factors for the development of ADHD. The risk factor for developing ADHD is also elevated in first degree relatives of individuals who also have the disorder. ADHD occurs more frequently in males than in females.