

What is ADHD?

ADHD is a mental health condition that is defined through analysis of behaviour. People with ADHD show a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity–impulsivity that interferes with day-to-day functioning and/or development.

Definition & Diagnosis

The relied on definition is set out by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

Inattention

Six or more symptoms of inattention for children up to age 16 years, or five or more for adolescents age 17 years and older and adults; symptoms of inattention have been present for at least 6 months, and they are inappropriate for developmental level:

Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, at work, or with other activities.

- Often has trouble holding attention on tasks or play activities.
- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
- Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (e.g., loses focus, side-tracked).
- Often has trouble organising tasks and activities.
- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework).
- Often loses things necessary for tasks and activities (e.g. school materials, pencils, books, tools, wallets, keys, paperwork, eyeglasses, mobile telephones).
- Is often easily distracted
- Is often forgetful in daily activities.

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity

Six or more symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity for children up to age 16 years; symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity have been present for at least 6 months to an extent that is disruptive and inappropriate for the person's developmental level:

- Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet, or squirms in seat.
- Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected.
- Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may be limited to feeling restless).
- Often unable to play or take part in leisure activities quietly.
- Is often "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor".
- Often talks excessively.
- Often blurts out an answer before a question has been completed.

- Often has trouble waiting their turn.
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or game)

In addition, the following conditions must be met:

- Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present before age 12 years.
- Several symptoms are present in two or more settings, (such as at home, school or work; with friends or relatives; in other activities).
- There is clear evidence that the symptoms interfere with, or reduce the quality of, social, school, or work functioning.
- The symptoms are not better explained by another mental disorder (such as a mood disorder, anxiety disorder, dissociative disorder, or a personality disorder). The symptoms do not happen only during the course of schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder.

How common is ADHD?

In the UK, a research survey of 10,438 children between the ages of 5 and 15 years found that 3.62% of boys and 0.85% of girls had ADHD.

The gender split is roughly 4:1 boys: girls.

Global prevalence is considered to be between 2 and 7% with an average of 5%.

What causes ADHD?

There is no one cause of ADHD. It is considered to be a result of multifactorial interaction between genetic and environmental factors – with genetic factors being responsible for 70%-80% of the probability.

Treatment

Treatment plans are dependent on an individual's specific circumstance. The options, used individually or together, include:

- Psychological therapies (including; psychoeducational input, behavioural therapy, and cognitive behavioural therapy [CBT] either alone or in groups)
- Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT)
- Social skills training
- Generally for children; family therapy, school-based interventions, parent or carer management training, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy.
- Medication