



Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

When you think about [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\)](#), what do you imagine? If you are like most people, you think of a child bouncing off the walls, that little boy that's running through the grocery store driving his mother nuts, buzzing with unfocused energy.

The truth is, that many people with ADHD are in fact not hyperactive at all. By the time they reach adulthood, most have calmed down – at least on the outside that is.

In this article we unpack ADHD, explore some of the facts and how best you can help and understand those close to you with the condition.

Not all children or adults with ADHD are hyperactive

We tend to think they're always on the go, can't sit still and the only speed they know is overdrive. Although these behaviors are signs of ADHD, some people with the disorder are relatively calm. Girls in particular are more likely to have the type of ADHD that primarily makes it difficult for them to focus. They will often daydream and find it difficult to follow instructions or concentrate on school work. Because these children are usually not disruptive, their ADHD often goes undiagnosed and untreated.

The diagnosis

ADHD can be diagnosed as early as the age of 3. Children at this age naturally have a very short attention span, so doctors may be hesitant to label them with ADHD, so most children are diagnosed around the age of 6, when they're expected to sit quietly, be able to pay attention and follow instructions. Parents advisor Harold Koplewicz, MD, President of the Child Mind Institute says: "By the time they're diagnosed with ADHD, most kids have had a long history of problem behaviours that can affect their self-esteem."



There are actually three types of ADHD, and one of them doesn't include symptoms of impulsive and hyperactive behaviour.

- **ADHD, Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation:** Kids who have this type of ADHD have symptoms of hyperactivity and feel the need to move constantly. They also struggle with impulse control.
- **ADHD, Predominantly Inattentive Presentation:** Kids who have this type of ADHD have difficulty paying attention. They're easily distracted but *don't* have issues with impulsivity or hyperactivity. This is sometimes referred to as [attention-deficit disorder](#) (or ADD).
- **ADHD, Combined Presentation:** This is the most common type of ADHD. Kids who have it show all of the symptoms described above.

Symptoms may be caused by other factors

Your child's behaviour patterns are affected by many external factors. Conditions like sleep apnea, vision problems or hearing impairments could make it hard for them to focus and cause them to become disruptive. Traumatic events, such as divorce or death of a family member can also trigger ADHD-like symptoms. Usually a paediatrician will have a mental health specialist assess your child, and observe them for some time to rule out potential learning disabilities before making an ADHD diagnosis.

Treatment

ADHD medication should be combined with additional behavioural strategies. For children, parents can learn ways to praise them for good behaviour, encourage them when they complete chores or do their homework. Teach them organization and time management skills - these skills will be crucial into adulthood. Adults with ADHD often need help getting organized, and making constructive decisions. They need emotional support to counteract the negative messages they've received all their lives when their actions did not meet people's expectations.

ADHD affects people in multiple areas of their life – home, work, school, relationships, etc. But people don't have to be captive to their ADHD. As Canadian comedian Rick Green once said of himself: "I used to suffer from ADHD. And now I just have it."

