

ADD/ADHD

*A Mental Health Educational Series brought to you by:
Innovative Psychological Consultants*

Description

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a well known childhood disorder that affects 5-7% of children and presents with problems with attention, hyperactivity and impulsive behavior. What is less well known is that 30-70% of children with ADHD continue to exhibit symptoms into adulthood. In order to be diagnosed with ADHD, there must be a childhood onset with persistent and continued symptoms into adulthood. ADHD is not something acquired in middle age. If a person has it, they have always had it. Men are 4 times more likely to have this disorder.

Symptoms & Features

There are three different types of ADHD: an inattentive type, hyperactive type, and combined type. In children the combined type is most common. As children age into young adulthood many notice their hyperactive symptoms improve, but tend to see the inattentive symptoms persist. Inattentive symptoms include: 1) fails to pay close attention to detail or makes careless mistakes, 2) has difficulty sustaining attention for long periods of time, 3) does not seem to listen when spoken to, 4) often fails to follow through with projects, 5) has trouble organizing activities or tasks, 6) often loses or misplaces things, 7) is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli, 8) often forgets daily activities. Hyperactive symptoms include: 1) often fidgets with hands or feet, 2) has trouble remaining seated and tends to move around, 3) generally feelings of restlessness, 4) has trouble engaging in leisure activities quietly, 5) tends to be “on the go” as if driven by a motor, 6) talks excessively, 7) blurts out answers before questions are completed, 8) has difficulty waiting their turn, 9) often interrupts or intrudes on conversations.

Current research suggests ADHD is likely due to differences in brain chemistry and function, especially in the frontal lobes. ADHD is not caused by poor parenting. Many other disorders can appear like ADHD and it is important to have a thorough assessment to rule out other issues such as depression and anxiety. An ADHD assessment should also include cognitive testing designed to measure functioning in different regions of the brain. Because of the social problems resulting from ADHD, many people with ADHD have other issues such as depression, anxiety, learning disabilities or conduct problems.

Treatment

ADHD is often treated with medication, psychotherapy, or a combination of both. The best course of treatment for each person is determined by the severity of symptoms and is something that should be discussed with your physician or mental health therapist. Medicinal treatments include: stimulant medications which are fast acting, short lived, and taken daily. Occasionally anti-depressants such as Wellbutrin or Strattera are used to treat ADHD.

Psychotherapy has been shown to be effective with education, coaching, and teaching behavioral tools to compensate for specific symptoms. Psychotherapy can also help address other co-occurring mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which often occur secondary to ADHD.

What Can I Do To Help Myself

If you think you may have ADHD, you should get an ADHD assessment and testing with a psychologist at IPC who performs ADHD evaluations. In addition, you can read about ADHD and its treatment. You can also check out resources such as Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) www.chadd.org Learning to structure your life with the help of an ADHD coach can also help compensate for specific symptom struggles.