

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Information for adults who  
have or think they have ADHD,  
and the people who support them



**Easy read booklet**

# Who we are and what this booklet tells you about



We are the **Royal College of Psychiatrists**.



We do work to help people with **mental illness, intellectual disabilities** and **developmental disorders**.



**Mental illness** is when you have problems that affect how you think, feel and behave.

**Intellectual disabilities** are problems that affect how you learn new things. Intellectual disabilities might also be called **learning disabilities**.

**Developmental disorders** affect how you grow, learn and behave.



This booklet tells you about **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**. It is for adults who have it or think they have it, and the people who support them.



**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder** is called **ADHD** for short. We call it ADHD in this booklet.

## Contents

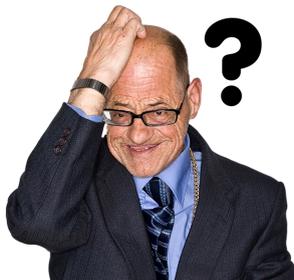
About ADHD	page 4
How to tell if you have ADHD	page 5
How common is ADHD	page 7
When does ADHD start	page 8
Strengths of ADHD	page 9
What causes ADHD	page 10
How is ADHD diagnosed	page 11
After you get diagnosed with ADHD	page 12
Support you can get	page 14
Ways to support yourself or someone else	page 19
More information	page 20

# About ADHD



If you have ADHD, you might have **challenges** with

- **inattention.**
- **hyperactivity.**
- **impulsivity.**



**Challenges** are difficult problems that happen in life.



**Inattention** means you find it hard to concentrate and stay thinking about 1 thing.

**Hyperactivity** means you are restless and find it hard to sit still.

**Impulsivity** means you do and say things without thinking about the effect you will have first.

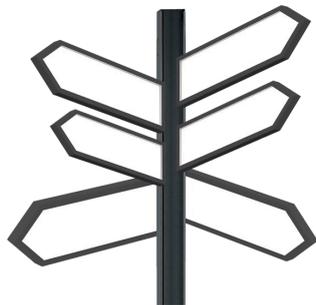


If you have ADHD and you do not get the right support or treatment, it can affect your mental or physical health in a bad way.

# How to tell if you have ADHD



On the next page we tell you the main **symptoms** of ADHD.



**Symptoms** are the signs you might have a health condition.



To get **diagnosed** with ADHD, your symptoms must badly affect some areas of your daily life, like

- home.
- school.
- work.
- social life.



**Diagnosed** means a doctor makes a decision about what a health problem is.

## Symptoms of ADHD



Symptoms of inattention include

- making mistakes.
- finding it hard to listen.
- not finishing things.
- finding it hard to follow instructions.
- finding it hard to be organised.
- losing and forgetting things.



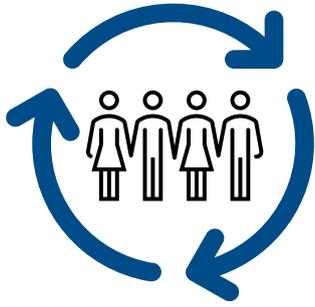
Symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity include

- not being able to sit still.
- feeling restless and having a lot of energy.
- being loud when you need to be quiet.
- talking too much.
- not being able to wait your turn.
- speaking over other people.



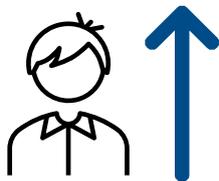
These symptoms might not mean you have ADHD. They might be signs you have a different health condition.

# How common is ADHD

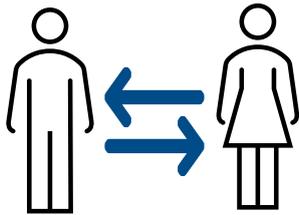


**Common** means happens a lot.

ADHD affects about 3 or 4 adults in every 100 adults.



It is more common for boys to get diagnosed with ADHD than girls.



The number is more equal for adults.



Doctors are more likely to not notice ADHD in women and girls.



More people are being diagnosed with ADHD. This might be because more people know about it and understand the symptoms better.

# When does ADHD start



The **challenges** of ADHD usually start when you are a child and carry on as you become an adult, but they might not start until you are an adult.



The challenges might get better or worse as you get older.



People with ADHD share common symptoms, but ADHD is different for every person.



We know that

- hyperactive and impulsive symptoms are more common in children.
- inattentive symptoms are more of a challenge for teenagers and adults.

# Strengths of ADHD



It is helpful to think of ADHD as something that makes you different instead of as a problem.



Some people see parts of their ADHD as strengths. These include

- being able to **hyper-focus**.
- being creative.



**Hyper-focus** means you can concentrate very hard on things you are interested in and learn a lot about them.

# What causes ADHD



No one knows exactly what **causes** ADHD.



**Cause** means the reason why something happens.



You are more likely to have ADHD if someone in your family has it.

# How is ADHD diagnosed



ADHD is diagnosed with an interview and an assessment.

An **assessment** is when you are asked questions to find out your health needs.



An ADHD assessment should collect lots of information about you, including about

- your symptoms.
- your mental health.
- your childhood, education and how you get on with daily life.
- any physical health problems you have.



The person who assesses you might also talk to your family.



ADHD assessments

- can take a long time so you might need more than 1 appointment.
- should follow national guidelines.

# After you get diagnosed with ADHD

After you get diagnosed with ADHD, you might feel



- **relieved**, because there is a reason for your challenges, and you know you are not the only person who has them.
- **frustrated**, because you were not diagnosed sooner.
- sad.



**Relieved** means how you feel when something bad is over or sorted out.



**Frustrated** means how you feel when something stops you doing what you should be able to do.



After you get diagnosed with ADHD, the person who assessed you should talk to you about

- things you find difficult.
- things you find helpful.
- services that can help you.

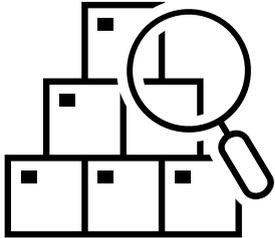


Before you start treatment for ADHD, the person who assessed you should talk to you about

- helpful changes you can make at home, school or work.
- helpful changes you can make to how you live your life.
- treatment you would like to have.
- good and bad effects of treatment.
- any worries you have about treatment.



# Support you can get



There are different types of support you can get for ADHD. We tell you about these on **pages 14 to 18 of this booklet.**



Remember, there is not 1 type of support that will make all your ADHD symptoms go away.



## Understand your ADHD

### Peer support groups

It can help to talk to or be around other people who have or know about ADHD.



**Peer support groups** are groups of people who have or know about ADHD. They meet in person or online to talk and support each other.



## Online information

It can help to learn more about ADHD. There is a lot of information online, but not all of it is good.

We tell you how to find out about useful websites on **page 20 of this booklet.**



## Coaching and mentoring

**Coaching and mentoring** is when one person gives advice to another person about something they know about or have experience of.



**Experience** means something that has happened in your life or that you have been a part of.

## Occupational Therapy (OT)

Occupational therapy supports people with mental or physical health problems to do everyday activities more easily.

You might get given occupational therapy by the NHS or you might need to pay for it.





## Psychological therapies

**Psychological therapies** are when you talk to an expert about your thoughts, feelings and how you behave.



## Learning and working

### Reasonable adjustments

**Reasonable adjustments** are changes made to a learning or work environment to make things fair for people with disabilities, including ADHD.

Reasonable adjustments for ADHD might include things like

- having a desk in a quiet area.
- getting instructions in a written and spoken way.
- getting help with how to organise your work.



### Access to Work

**Access to Work** is a service that helps people with disabilities to

- get more support at work.
- get a job.

Go to this website for more information.

[www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)





## Medication

**Medication** means the drugs or medicines that are used to treat mental or physical health problems.



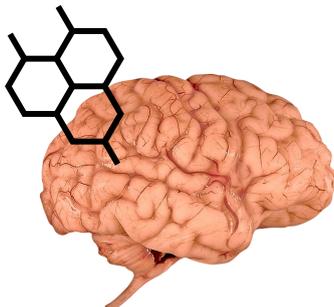
Before you start taking medication for ADHD, the person treating you will

- check your mental and physical health.
- tell you about **side effects** and how to notice them.
- tell you about **risks**.



**Side effects** are when a type of medication makes you feel bad.

**Risks** are how likely it is something bad will happen.



Medication for ADHD increases some of the chemicals in your brain to help you control your attention and behaviour.

# 2

There are 2 types of medication for ADHD called

- **stimulant.**
- **non-stimulant.**

methylphenidate  
dexamfetamine

**Stimulant** medications for ADHD are called

- methylphenidate.
- dexamfetamine.



Stimulant medications usually start to have an effect very quickly. For most people, they work well for ADHD.

atomoxetine  
guanfacine

**Non-stimulant** medications for ADHD are called

- atomoxetine.
- guanfacine.



Non-stimulant medications usually take longer to have an effect than stimulant medications. They are usually used if stimulant medications haven't worked well.

# Ways to support yourself



There are lots of things you can do to support yourself if you have ADHD. You can

- tell people around you how they can help you.
- do regular exercise.
- get enough sleep.
- eat the right foods for a healthy diet.

# Ways to support someone else



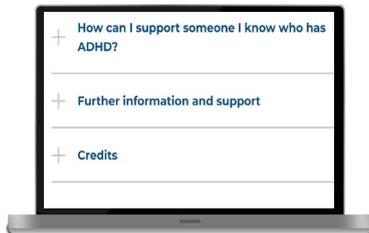
There are lots of things you can do to support someone you know if they have ADHD. You can

- find out information about ADHD.
- join a support group for family and friends.
- ask what you can do to help.
- help other people understand more about ADHD.
- talk to someone you trust about how the other person's ADHD makes you feel.



# More information

You can find a list of useful websites for ADHD on our website.



Go to this website and scroll down to the heading called **Further information and support**  
[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/adhd-in-adults](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/adhd-in-adults)



This booklet is an Easy Read summary. Go to this website to read the full version of this booklet

[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/adhd-in-adults](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/adhd-in-adults)



The information in the full version was written in June 2023. It shows the best information there was at that time.

Thank you to A2i for the words [www.a2i.co.uk](http://www.a2i.co.uk) (ref 38009)