

## Some common misconceptions about ADHD.

**Myth:** ADHD is basically due to bad parenting; the only thing ADHD children really need is old-fashioned discipline.

**Fact:** If it were only that easy! ADHD children usually learn what the rules are that their parents are trying to teach them. They want to do the right thing, they just don't have the ability to stop and think about that at the time. Continuously punishing an ADHD child for behaviors that happen automatically, which they want to control, but can't, is just much more likely to lead to frustration and depression in that child.

Just as a diabetic cannot control their insulin levels just by thinking about it, an ADHD person cannot control their brain dopamine levels by thinking about it. It is a similar difference, just a different organ of the body.

The good news is that the difficulties which are typical of ADHD behavior can be successfully improved through a combination of therapies that addresses the whole problem.

**Myth:** ADHD is over diagnosed and over treated.

**Fact:** While it is certainly true that at times ADHD is inaccurately diagnosed or ineffectively treated, less than half of all children with ADHD are receiving treatment. With 7% or more of school age children meeting the criteria for ADHD, recent research has documented that less than 3% of school age children are being treated for ADHD.

**Myth:** ADHD kids are all hyperactive.

**Fact:** Hyperactivity is just the body's urge to physically seek out something of interest to the brain.

While it may be the most visible symptom, hyperactivity does not cause the biggest impact in an ADHD person's life. Rather, it is the less visible aspects of inattentiveness and poor impulse control that hinder performance at school, work or home.

When an ADHD person is hyperfocused on something of interest (e.g., a video game), they can sit in the same position for hours, but if they are not hyperfocused it may be almost impossible for them to sit still for even a few minutes.

When a person with ADHD cannot focus well enough to understand or finish a task, or they act impulsively without thinking things through, the outcome will be poor. The management of ADHD will be most successful when all three primary aspects – hyperactivity, inattention, and impulsivity – are addressed.

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Furthermore, not all people with ADHD are hyperactive. The following question addresses this subject.

**Myth:** ADHD affects only boys and not girls.

**Fact:** ADHD is more common in boys by probably a 2:1 ratio, but it does also affect girls. However, symptoms may be different in boys than in girls.

Eighty percent of boys have the predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type of ADHD. Children with the hyperactivity component of ADHD are more noticeable: they're the ones who are most likely to be referred by schools for treatment.

However, 80% of girls have the primarily inattentive type of ADHD. Rather than bouncing off the walls, they are sitting quietly at their desks daydreaming and missing out on the teacher's instructions. This will result in their poor performance, but without a rapid identification of the cause. So intervention for such girls is often delayed, or doesn't come until they are adults, after their ADHD children are diagnosed.

For both boys and girls, it's important to be aware of the less visible but just as difficult inattentive variation of ADHD.

Also, ADHD is not just found in children, and may look different in adults. The following question addresses this subject.

**Myth:** Children outgrow ADHD; it doesn't affect adults.

**Fact:** ADHD is not found just in children. A number of follow-up studies conducted over the past few decades show that ADHD often lasts a lifetime.

Overall, less than one third of people "outgrow" ADHD, about one third get somewhat better and manage, but with varying degrees of difficulty, and one third continue to have significant difficulties into adulthood.

In many teens and adults, the symptoms of ADHD may appear to decrease simply because the teen or adult learns better techniques to improve his or her focus, time management and organizational skills.

If untreated, individuals with ADHD may develop a variety of secondary problems as they move through life, including academic, emotional, vocational and relationship problems. However, if properly treated, most individuals with ADHD live productive lives and learn to cope with their symptoms. With effective assistance we believe that most ADHD adults can learn how to use their differences to their benefit, while learning successful tools and coping mechanisms for their areas of weakness.

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ADHD adults can learn coping mechanisms that help them use their differences to their benefit.

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**Myth:** Teachers just want any child who may be difficult to deal with to be drugged into submission.

**Fact:** Teachers usually have the best interest of their students in mind. When a teacher sees a student who's struggling to concentrate, it's her responsibility to bring this to parents' attention.

We do agree that teachers are not qualified to diagnose ADHD, but they are usually very good at knowing what behaviors are within the normal range for children, and what behaviors or problems fall outside the norm. Also, since the symptoms of ADHD must be present in two or more environments, information from teachers can be very helpful in the diagnosis and monitoring of treatment for children with ADHD.

It is also very helpful to have teachers play an active role in helping the ADHD child, as they need assistance in learning new skills and habits at the times when those skills are to be used.

**Myth:** It is not possible to accurately diagnose ADHD in children or adults.

**Fact:** Although scientists have not yet developed a single medical test for diagnosing ADHD, clear-cut clinical diagnostic criteria have been developed, researched, and refined over several decades. The current accepted diagnostic criteria for ADHD are listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) published by the American Psychiatric Association (1995). Using these criteria and multiple methods to collect comprehensive information, ADHD can be reliably diagnosed in children and adults.

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**Note:** the "Myths and Facts" article above was drawn in part from  
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[http://www.add-adhd-infoplus.com/add\\_adhd.html](http://www.add-adhd-infoplus.com/add_adhd.html)  
with edits and additional information by Dr. Mark Romereim.

The Attention Center specializes in the diagnosis and positive treatment of ADD/ADHD in all ages. We approach ADHD not as a "disorder" or a "deficit," but as a biological difference in how the brain works.

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