

# Learning About Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Adults



## What is ADHD?

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Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition in which people have a hard time paying attention. Adults with ADHD also may be more active than normal. They tend to act without thinking. ADHD may make it harder for them to focus, get organized, and finish tasks.

ADHD most often starts in childhood and lasts into adulthood. Many adults don't know that they have ADHD until their children are diagnosed. Then they begin to see their own symptoms.

Doctors don't know what causes ADHD. But it tends to run in families.

## What are the symptoms?

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The most common types of ADHD symptoms in adults are attention problems and hyperactivity.

### Attention problems

Adults with ADHD often find it hard to:

- Finish tasks that don't interest them or aren't easy. But they may become obsessed with activities that they find interesting and enjoy.
- Keep relationships.
- Focus their attention on conversations, reading materials, or jobs. They may change jobs a lot.
- Remember things. They may misplace or lose things.
- Pay attention. They are easily distracted. They find it hard to focus on one task.
- Think before they act. They may make quick decisions. They may act before they think about the effect of their actions.

## Hyperactivity

Adults with ADHD may:

- Fidget. They may swing their legs, shift in their seats, or tap their fingers.
- Move around a lot. They may feel "revved up" or on the go. They may not be able to slow down until they are very tired.
- Find it hard to relax. They may feel restless and find it hard to do quiet things like read or watch TV.

## How does ADHD affect daily life?

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ADHD in adults may affect:

- Job performance. They may find it hard to organize their work, manage their time, and focus on one task at a time. They may forget, misplace, or lose things. They may quit their jobs out of boredom.
- Relationships. Adults with ADHD may find it hard to focus their attention on conversations. It is hard for them to "read" the behavior and moods of others and express their own feelings.
- Temper. They may get easily frustrated. This often can make it harder for them to deal with stress. These adults may overreact and have a short, quick temper.
- The ability to solve problems. Adults who have a hard time waiting for things they want may act before they think about the effect of their actions. They may take part in risky behaviors. These include unprotected sex, unsafe driving, alcohol and drug use, or unwise business ventures.

## How is ADHD treated?

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ADHD can be treated with medicines, behavior training, or counseling. Or it may be a combination of these treatments.



### Medicines

Stimulant medicines are most often used to treat ADHD. These may include:

- Amphetamines. (Examples are Adderall and Dexedrine).
- Methylphenidate. (Examples are Concerta, Daytrana, Focalin, Metadate, and Ritalin).

Other medicines that may be used are:

- Atomoxetine. This includes Strattera, a nonstimulant medicine for ADHD.
- Antihypertensives. These include clonidine (such as Catapres) and guanfacine (such as Tenex).
- Antidepressants. These include bupropion (Wellbutrin).

## Behavior training

Behavior training can help adults with ADHD learn how to:

- Get organized. A daily organizer or planner can help these adults organize their daily tasks. They can write down appointments and other things they need to remember.
- Decrease distractions. They can set up their work or home environment so that there are fewer things that will distract them. They may find using headphones or a "white noise" machine helpful. College students can arrange a quiet living situation. They may need a single dorm room.
- Work on relationships. Social skills training can help adults with ADHD relate to family, friends, and coworkers. Couples counseling or family therapy can also help improve relationships.

## Counseling

Counseling is not meant to treat inattention, hyperactivity, or impulsiveness. But it can help with some of the problems that go along with ADHD. These include not getting along well with others and having problems following rules.

### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **Z848** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Adults**".

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