

# facts about ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a common and treatable neurological-behavioral condition that inhibits a person's ability to focus and pay attention for extended periods of time, to think before acting, and to organize and complete tasks. It is often diagnosed in childhood, but is increasingly diagnosed in adults as well. A person with ADHD may struggle in important areas of life, such as peer and family relationships, and school or work performance.

## Types of ADHD

There are three types of ADHD. Diagnosis depends upon the types of symptoms a person exhibits, at what age they appear, how long they persist, if they are inappropriate for the person's age, and how the symptoms interfere in a person's overall functioning.

**Predominantly Inattentive Type:** It may be hard for the individual to organize or finish a task, to pay attention to details, or to follow instructions or conversations. Focusing in the classroom may be very difficult. The person can be easily distracted or forget details of daily routines.

**Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type:** The person may fidget and talk a lot. It may be hard to sit still for long (e.g., for a meal or while doing homework). Smaller children may run, jump or climb constantly. The individual may often feel restless or have trouble with impulsivity. Someone who is impulsive may interrupt others a lot, grab things from people, or speak at inappropriate times. It may be hard for the person to wait their turn or listen to directions. A person with impulsiveness may have more accidents and injuries than others.

**Combined Type:** Symptoms of the above two types are equally predominant in the person.

## Treatment

Medications have been used for decades to treat symptoms of ADHD. The medications that seem to be the most effective are stimulants. There are many different medications within this class of drugs, and patients and their families must work with their physicians to determine the most effective option. About 80 percent of children who need medication for ADHD still need it as teenagers. Over 50 percent need medication as adults.

Psychotherapy works to help children and adults with ADHD to like and accept themselves despite their disorder. It does not address the symptoms or underlying causes of the disorder. In psychotherapy, patients talk with the therapist about upsetting thoughts and feelings, explore self-defeating patterns of behavior, and learn alternative ways to handle their emotions.

Behavioral therapy helps children and adults develop more effective ways to work on immediate issues by directly changing thinking and coping patterns to change behavior. The support might be practical assistance, like help in organizing tasks or dealing with emotionally charged events. Or it might involve learning to monitor one's own behaviors, and recognizing and rewarding success.

Social skills training helps people learn and practice new behaviors. Discussion and modeling teach both adults and children new behaviors that develop and maintain social relationships – like waiting for a turn, thinking before acting, sharing, asking for help, or appropriately coping with conflict.

Support groups help parents connect with other people who have similar problems and concerns with their ADHD children. Parents share information about what works, learn from experts on ADHD and obtain referrals to qualified specialists.