



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

MARGARET MEAD

ADD/ADHD SERIES – PART 2

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http://www.facesva.org/pdf/articles/add_adhd_part2_apr2009.pdf

Diagnosing ADD & ADHD

Making the Diagnosis in Children and Adults

If you think you or your child may have ADD or ADHD, seek an evaluation from a mental health professional. The symptoms of ADD/ADHD, such as concentration problems and hyperactivity, can be confused with other disorders and medical problems. Just because it looks like ADHD doesn't mean it is, so getting a thorough assessment and diagnosis is important. Since diagnosis can be complicated, make sure to see someone who specializes in ADD and ADHD.

Diagnosing ADD/ADHD in children

If you suspect that your child has ADD/ADHD, schedule an appointment with a specialist for a diagnostic assessment. At present, no laboratory or imaging test exists to determine if your child has ADD/ADHD. Clinicians base their diagnosis on the behavioral symptoms they observe and by ruling out other disorders.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that an evaluation for childhood ADD/ADHD include:

- A thorough medical and family history.
- A general physical and neurological exam.
- A comprehensive interview with the parents, the child, and the child's teacher(s).
- Standardized screening tools for ADD/ADHD.
- Observation of the child.
- A variety of psychological tests to measure IQ and social and emotional adjustment.

Diagnosing ADD/ADHD in adults

Many people only learn that they have ADD/ADHD when they become adults. Some find out after their children receive the diagnosis; as they become educated about the condition, they realize that they also have it. For others, the symptoms finally outpace their coping skills, causing significant enough problems in their daily life that they seek help. If you recognize the

signs and symptoms of ADD/ADHD in yourself, schedule a visit with a mental health professional for an assessment.

Because ADD/ADHD often co-occur with other conditions such as anxiety and depression, it is best to see a psychiatrist or psychologist who has experience diagnosing and treating the disorder. To determine if you have ADD/ADHD, the specialist will:

- Ask you about your symptoms, including how long they've been bothering you.
- Administer ADD/ADHD tests, such as symptom checklists and attention-span tests.
- Ask you about problems the symptoms are causing or have caused in the past.
- Talk to family members or someone close to you about the symptoms.
- Give you a medical exam to rule out other physical causes for the symptoms.

How do I know if I need an evaluation for adult ADD/ADHD?

Most adults who need to be evaluated for AD/HD have serious problems with concentration or paying attention, or are overactive in one or more areas of living. Some of the most common problems include:

- Problems with jobs or careers; losing or quitting jobs frequently
- Problems doing as well as you should at work or in school
- Problems with day-to-day tasks such as doing household chores, paying bills, organizing things
- Problems with relationships because you forget important things, can't finish tasks, or get upset over little things
- Ongoing stress and worry because you don't meet goals and responsibilities
- Ongoing, strong feelings of frustration, guilt, or blame

Source: [National Resource Center on AD/HD](#)

ADD/ADHD Diagnostic Criteria

To be diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, both children and adults must exhibit multiple symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, or inattention. In addition, the mental health professional assessing the problem will also look at:

- The severity of the symptoms — To be diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, the symptoms must have a negative impact on the person's education, career, relationships, or social life.
- When the symptoms started — Since ADD/ADHD starts in childhood, the doctor or therapist will look at how early the symptoms appeared. To receive a diagnosis, the symptoms must have been present before age seven.
- How long the symptoms have been present — The symptoms must have been going on for at least 6 months before ADD/ADHD can be diagnosed.
- When and where the symptoms appear — The symptoms of ADD/ADHD must be present in multiple settings, such as at home and school. If the problem only appears in one environment, it is unlikely to be caused by ADD/ADHD.

Professional Help for Children and Adults

Left untreated, ADD and ADHD can cause many problems. Children may fall behind in school and clash with parents and peers. Adults may suffer from relationship, career, and financial difficulties. But treatment can help both children and adults minimize the symptoms of ADD and ADHD, develop effective coping skills, and work through problems at home, work, and school. Treatment options include behavior therapy, medication, support groups, social skills training, educational support, and professional coaching.

We will be exploring the following topics in the next several newsletters. You may also go to www.Helpguide.org for the following articles:

- [Getting help for ADD/ADHD](#)
- [Developing an ADD/ADHD treatment plan](#)
- [Behavioral therapy for ADD/ADHD](#)
- [Medication treatment of ADD/ADHD](#)

Source: www.Helpguide.org

www.Helpguide.org has a host of useful articles for families dealing with ADD/ADHD as well as other wellness issues. Public libraries usually have free access to on line research. You may contact the **FACES** Center at (804) 278-0035 for more information if you do not have access to the web.