



Employee NEWSLETTER

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What You Should Know About Untreated ADHD In Adults

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Many adults face distractions in their daily lives caused by work, family and other stressors, but certain conditions can heighten a lack of focus and disorganization. One cause may be attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a neurodevelopmental condition that affects a person's behavior.

ADHD begins in childhood and continues through the teenage years into adulthood. According to the American Psychiatric Association, ADHD affects about 8.4 percent of children and 2.5 percent of adults. If you feel that you may be experiencing symptoms of ADHD, you are not alone. Women especially may slip through the cracks when being diagnosed, as women's symptoms may be more subtle, leading to ADHD going unnoticed and untreated.

When untreated, ADHD in adults can present as biological and environmental factors that interfere with many aspects of a person's daily life, including their relationships. These symptoms may lead to extreme procrastination, trouble meeting deadlines and impulsive behavior. In addition, people with ADHD may feel that friends and family don't understand what they're experiencing. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of ADHD is key to beginning treatment.

Although ADHD affects both children and adults, there are no lab tests that diagnose ADHD. When treating symptoms in adults, a doctor may evaluate a person's medical and

developmental history and look at their behaviors and how they interact with the world around them.

ADHD symptoms can also mimic other mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression or bipolar disorder, so it is important to be evaluated by a trained professional to ensure you meet the diagnostic criteria or determine if you are struggling with another condition.

What causes ADHD in adults?

While the causes of ADHD are unknown, however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention believes that genetics play a large part in it. Other factors that may lead to the development of ADHD include Brain injury or irregular brain development, tobacco use or alcohol consumption during pregnancy, pre-term birth or low birth weight, and lack of certain nutrients.

What does ADHD feel like?

Many adults with ADHD aren't aware they have it – they just know that they can struggle with everyday tasks, adding extra stress to their busy life. Adults with ADHD may find it difficult to focus and prioritize due to a lack of time management skills. Their inability to control impulses can range from impatience waiting in line or in traffic to mood swings and sudden outbursts of anger.

How are you diagnosed with ADHD?

While there is no single medical, physical or genetic test for ADHD, a diagnostic evaluation can be provided by a qualified professional who gathers information via multiple sources. These sources may include an ADHD symptoms checklists, which may include symptoms such as impulsivity, anxiety and emotional concerns. Other diagnosis tools include rating scales, a detailed history of past and current functioning and background gathered from close family and friends.

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Some common symptoms include:

- **Lack of Focus** – Lack of focus, the most telltale symptom of ADHD goes beyond simply finding it hard to pay attention at school or work. It can also mean being easily distracted, finding it hard to listen to others in a conversation, overlooking details and not completing tasks or projects. Many people find that this distractibility can lead to a history of career under-performance, especially in noisy or busy offices.
- **Hyperfocus** – A person with ADHD can get so engrossed in something that they can become unaware of anything else around them. While this can be a useful trait when needing to focus closely on a specific task, it can become counterproductive when there are more important tasks at hand someone is forgoing.
- **Disorganization** – An adult with ADHD may find it hard to manage their organizational skills. This can include finding it hard to keep track of tasks and prioritize them logically. The responsibilities of adulthood – such as holding a job, paying bills and taking care of children – can make problems with organization more obvious and problematic than in childhood.
- **Time Management Concerns** – Adults with ADHD may find it hard to effectively manage their time. They may procrastinate on tasks, show up late for events and ignore assignments they find boring. The “now” is often more top-of-mind and interesting.
- **Forgetfulness** – For someone with ADHD, forgetfulness tends to occur more often. This can include routinely forgetting where you’ve put something or what important dates you need to keep. This forgetfulness can affect careers and relationships.
- **Impulsivity** – Impulsiveness in someone with ADHD can manifest in several ways, including interrupting others during conversation, being socially inappropriate, rushing through tasks and acting without much consideration for the consequences.
- **Emotional Concerns** – Life with ADHD can seem challenging, as though your emotions are constantly in flux. Small frustrations can seem intolerable or

bring on depression and shifts in mood. Untreated emotions may complicate personal and professional relationships.

- **Restlessness and Anxiety** – Anxiety is a common symptom of adult ADHD, as the mind tends to replay worrisome events repeatedly. Rather than bouncing off the walls, adults are more likely to be restless or find they can’t relax.

What is the next step if you think you might have untreated ADHD?

A person should contact their doctor if they believe they could have untreated or undiagnosed ADHD. A doctor will be able to recommend a treatment plan based on the individual's symptoms and overall state of health. Receiving a correct diagnosis and managing certain challenging behaviors can help adults with ADHD better cope with the symptoms of the condition.

You can also learn to break down tasks into smaller steps and follow a systematic approach to organization. By implementing various structures and routines and taking advantage of tools such as daily planners and reminders, you can set yourself up to maintain organization and control clutter.

How can you manage ADHD?

ADHD is highly manageable with an individualized treatment approach that can include behavioral intervention, educational support, and medication.

If your ADHD is mild, you may want to consider cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or meeting with a professional organizer. They can help you learn how to get organized, stick with plans and finish activities that you start. There are also benefits to joining a support group to find encouragement from others who understand your daily experience.

Medication may help as well; there are a variety of options based on the specific symptoms of your ADHD and your long-term treatment goals.

Sources:

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/adhd/what-is-adhd>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/facts.html>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/add-adhd/managing-adult-adhd-attention-deficit-disorder.htm>