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PATIENT INFORMATION ON ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD) IN ADULTS

A Guide to Understanding & Managing ADHD

Background

What is ADHD?

ADHD (Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects people from childhood into adulthood. It is not just about attention deficits and hyperactivity—it is a different way of brain functioning that affects focus, emotional regulation, impulse control, and executive function (planning & organisation skills).

ADHD is lifelong—all people with ADHD have had it since childhood, but many go undiagnosed and struggle with school, work, and family life. Some only receive a diagnosis as adults when ADHD is recognised in their children.

Growing awareness is helping more people understand ADHD, leading to better support and recognition for those who need it.

How Common is ADHD?

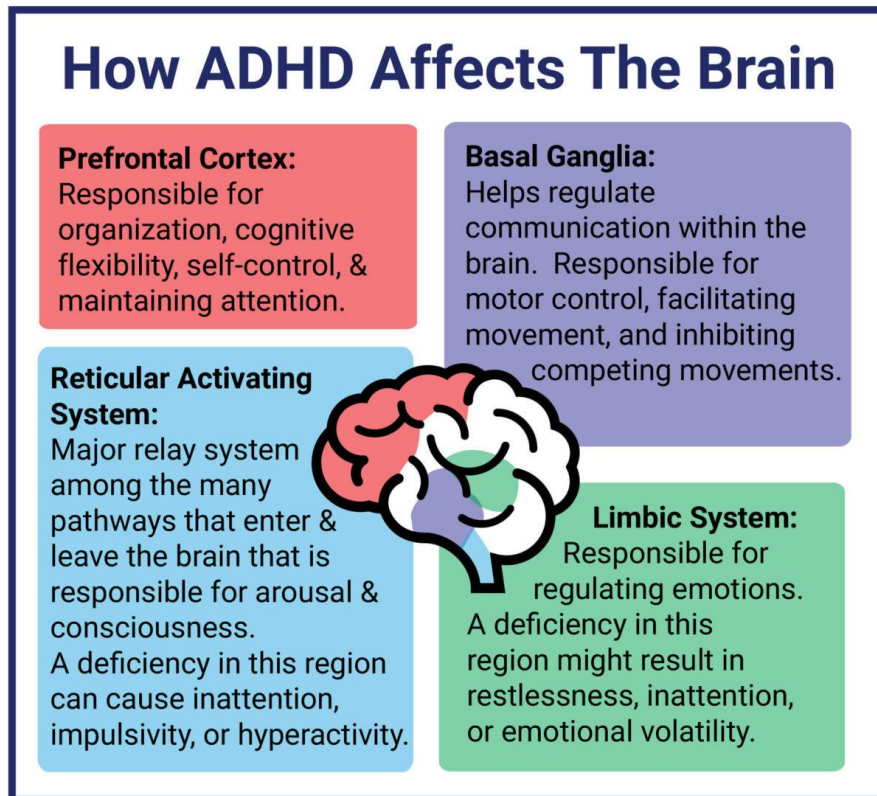
- Children: Around 5% of children are estimated to have ADHD.
- Adults: 3% of adults still experience significant ADHD symptoms.
- Underdiagnosis: ADHD is often missed in women, inattentive-type individuals, and high-achievers who learn to “mask” their struggles.

What Causes ADHD?

ADHD is highly genetic—if a parent has ADHD, their child has a 50–80% chance of also having it. It is linked to differences in the regulation of brain neurotransmitters dopamine and noradrenaline, affecting attention, motivation, and impulse control.

Other possible contributing factors include:

- Brain structure & function: Smaller prefrontal cortex & differences in dopamine pathways.
- Prenatal factors: Premature birth, maternal smoking/alcohol use.
- Evolutionary theory: Some researchers suggest ADHD traits may have been advantageous in hunter-gatherer societies, helping with quick thinking, creativity, and adaptability.



Symptoms & Presentation

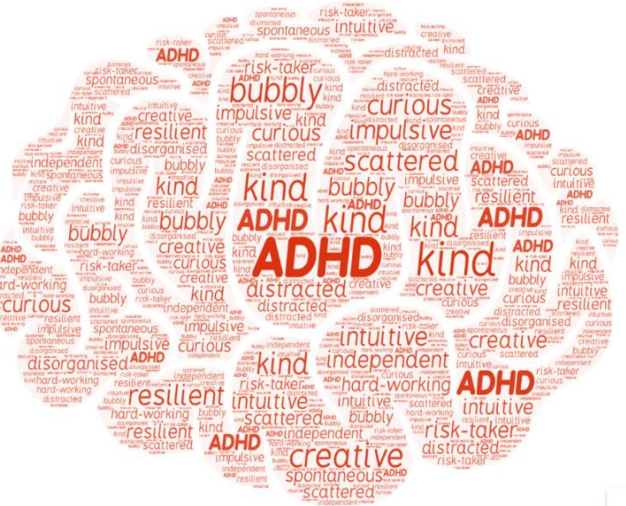
ADHD is more than just inattention and hyperactivity—many symptoms go unrecognised, such as overwhelm, emotional dysregulation, and time blindness.

Core ADHD Symptoms:

- ✓ **Inattention** – Easily distracted, forgetful, trouble following through on tasks.
- ✓ **Hyperactivity** – Restlessness, fidgeting, excessive talking.
- ✓ **Impulsivity** – Interrupting others, making snap decisions, struggling to wait.

Additional Symptoms Many Don't Realise Are ADHD-Related:

- ◆ **Overwhelm & "ADHD paralysis"** – Feeling stuck or shutting down when faced with too much information.
- ◆ **Hyperfocus** – The opposite of distractibility—becoming intensely absorbed in certain activities while ignoring everything else.
- ◆ **Time blindness** – Difficulty estimating time, leading to chronic lateness or procrastination.
- ◆ **Executive dysfunction** – Poor planning, organisation, and follow-through on tasks.
- ◆ **Emotional dysregulation** – Intense mood swings, sensitivity to rejection, difficulty calming down.



Getting an ADHD Assessment on the NHS

- 1 *Talk to your GP* – Explain your symptoms and how they impact your daily life.
- 2 *Referral to a specialist* – This could be an NHS neurodevelopmental team or a psychiatrist.
- 3 *Right to Choose (RTC)* – Alternative Pathway in England
 - Under the NHS Right to Choose, you can request an assessment with a different NHS provider to reduce waiting times.

More info: <https://adhduk.co.uk/right-to-choose/>

Right to Choose (RTC), Private Providers & ADHD Medication Prescribing

- **GPs do not have the expertise to initiate, manage, or monitor ADHD medication**—this remains the responsibility of the **specialist consultant** overseeing treatment.
- If you are diagnosed by a Right to Choose provider or a private provider, **that provider remains responsible for prescribing ADHD medication** indefinitely or until the practice agrees to enter a shared care agreement (SCA).
- **The practice does not accept SCAs from Right to Choose or private providers** at this time, but this position is kept under review in line with NHS prescribing guidelines and Integrated Care Board (ICB) guidance.
- GPs are not required to accept an SCA if they feel unable to safely prescribe and monitor ADHD medication.

Medication Costs:

- For *Right to Choose* patients, the cost of medication is covered by the NHS (the usual prescription cost applies).
- For *private patients*, the full cost of the medication must be covered either by insurance or by the patient.

More information on RTC: <https://adhduk.co.uk/right-to-choose/>

Treatment Options for ADHD

How ADHD Medication Works:

ADHD medication increases dopamine and noradrenaline levels in the brain, improving focus, impulse control, and emotional regulation:





- *Stimulants* (First-Line Treatment) – Methylphenidate (Ritalin), Lisdexamfetamine (Elvanse).
- *Non-Stimulants* – Atomoxetine (Strattera), Guanfacine.

 For information on who is responsible for prescribing ADHD medication, see the section on "Right to Choose (RTC) & ADHD Medication Prescribing".

Therapy & Coaching:




- *CBT* (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) – Helps challenge negative thought patterns.
- *ADHD Coaching* – Focuses on productivity, organisation, and motivation strategies.

Self-Help & Lifestyle Strategies:

-  **Organisation Hacks** – External reminders, sticky notes, time-blocking.
-  **Body Doubling** – Working alongside someone else to stay on task.
-  **Exercise & Movement** – Helps increase dopamine levels naturally.
-  **Supplements & Diet** – Omega-3, Magnesium, Vitamin D may support brain function.

ADHD in the Workplace

Common Challenges & Solutions:




-  **Time management struggles** → Task timers, structured check-ins.
-  **Noise sensitivity in open-plan offices** → Noise-cancelling headphones, quiet workspaces.
-  **Paperwork difficulties** → Voice notes, text-to-speech software.

Workplace Rights (UK)

- ✓ Reasonable Adjustments (Equality Act 2010) – Employers must accommodate ADHD in the workplace.
 - ✓ Access to Work Scheme – Government funding for ADHD coaching & assistive technology.
- More info: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

ADHD & Relationships

ADHD affects communication & emotional regulation, leading to:

-  **Forgetfulness in conversations** – Zoning out, missing important details.
-  **Strong emotional reactions** – Reacting intensely to criticism.
-  **Difficulty with planning** – Forgetting plans, last-minute scheduling.




Tips for Better Relationships:

- ✓ **Clear communication** – Be direct and use reminders.
- ✓ **Scheduled check-ins** – Weekly couple or family planning.
- ✓ **Self-awareness** – Learn how ADHD affects relationships.

Long-Term Outlook & Prognosis

ADHD is lifelong, but not a life sentence. Many people thrive when they understand their ADHD and build strategies to manage challenges.

Notable Successful People with ADHD:

-  **Athletes:** Michael Phelps, Simone Biles.
-  **Entrepreneurs:** Richard Branson, Ingvar Kamprad (IKEA founder).
-  **Artists & Entertainers:** Will.i.am, Justin Timberlake, Ryan Gosling.

Further Resources & Support

Recommended Books on ADHD:

1. "ADHD 2.0" by Dr. Edward M. Hallowell & Dr. John J. Ratey
 - Offers insights into living with ADHD and strategies for thriving.
2. "Now It All Makes Sense" by Alex Partridge
 - A personal account exploring the challenges and revelations of an adult ADHD diagnosis.
3. "Driven to Distraction" by Dr. Edward M. Hallowell & Dr. John J. Ratey
 - A seminal work that delves into recognizing and managing ADHD in daily life.
4. "Taking Charge of ADHD" by Dr. Russell A. Barkley
 - A comprehensive guide for parents navigating ADHD in children.
5. "Scattered Minds: The Origins and Healing of Attention Deficit Disorder" by Dr. Gabor Maté
 - Explores the root causes of ADHD and offers a holistic approach to healing.
6. "Delivered from Distraction" by Dr. Edward M. Hallowell & Dr. John J. Ratey
 - Provides updated information and strategies for living a fulfilling life with ADHD.
7. "Organizing Solutions for People with ADHD" by Susan Pinsky
 - Offers practical tips and tools to help individuals with ADHD organize their lives.
8. "The Adult ADHD Toolkit" by Dr. J. Russell Ramsay & Dr. Anthony L. Rostain
 - Provides coping strategies and tools specifically tailored for adults with ADHD.

Reputable Websites for ADHD Information:

ADHD Foundation (UK): Offers resources, training, and support for individuals with ADHD.

- Website: <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>

ADDISS (The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service): Provides information and resources for individuals with ADHD and their families.

- Website: <https://www.addiss.co.uk/>

NHS UK – ADHD Overview: Offers an overview of ADHD, including symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options.

- Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/>

CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder): A US-based organization providing education, advocacy, and support for individuals with ADHD.

- Website: <https://chadd.org/>

ADDitude Magazine: A comprehensive resource offering articles, webinars, and tools related to ADHD.

- Website: <https://www.additudemag.com/>

CADDRA (Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance): Provides resources and guidelines for ADHD management.

- Website: <https://www.caddra.ca/>

These resources have been curated to provide a diverse range of perspectives and strategies for understanding and managing ADHD.



If you have further questions:

Fill out a ***triage form*** on our **website**: www.cirencesterhealthgroup.co.uk

Call the ***practice*** on *01285 653184 or 01285 653122*

If you require ***urgent*** medical advice, call *111 (24 Hrs)*

In an ***emergency*** call ***999***