

ADHD

ADHD is an abbreviation for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. It is a neurological condition that is identified by an ongoing presentation of:

- **Inattention**- this may look like a person who wanders off task, has difficulty maintaining focus and/or is disorganized, makes careless mistakes or appear to be forgetful
- **Hyperactivity**- this may look like a person who moves around constantly regardless of the situation they are in, someone who excessively fidgets or talks. They may appear restless or easily distracted and struggle with turn taking.
- **Impulsivity**- this may look like a person who makes irrational and hasty decisions and actions in the moment. They may not understand social cues and interrupt others conversation.

It is important to note the difference between developmentally typical behaviours and ADHD. The difference in a person with ADHD is that these behaviours are usually more prevalent, occur frequently and interfere and impact on development and how a person functions everyday socially, at school, or in a job. A person's ADHD also has to be pervasive- present across all situations.

The exact cause of ADHD is unknown, but there has been some research which shows a genetic link to ADHD. Co-occurring conditions such as anxiety, depression, and learning disabilities are more of a rule than expectation in those with ADHD. Those with ADHD show differences in their brains as well as behaviour delay. There is thought to be around a 3-5 year delay in the cortical maturation in a person with ADHD. There is no cure for ADHD however there are strategies and interventions that can help modify and manage symptoms and improve a person's functioning. These include parent training, environmental modification and medication. Medication for people with ADHD has been shown to help reduce hyperactivity and impulsivity and improve a person's ability to focus.

A diagnosis of ADHD will not usually be confirmed in children until around six years old however could be confirmed earlier depending on the prevalence. Under current diagnostic guidelines ADHD in adults cannot be confirmed unless there is evidence of the impairment before the age of 12 and they must have at least 5 symptoms of one of the presentations. Clinicians follow a set criteria to diagnose ADHD in children. The NHS states for a child to be diagnosed with ADHD they 'must have 6 or more symptoms of inattentiveness, or 6 or more symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsiveness, been displaying symptoms continuously for at least 6 months, started to show symptoms before the age of 12, been showing symptoms in at least 2 different settings – for example, at home and at school, to rule out the possibility that the behaviour is just a reaction to certain teachers or to parental control, symptoms that make their lives considerably more difficult on a social, academic or occupational level, symptoms that are not just part of a developmental disorder or difficult phase, and are not better accounted for by another condition.'

The ratio of girls to boys being diagnosed is 1:2 however there is no scientific evidence that suggests ADHD is more prevalent in boys than girls. It has been critiqued that because the DSM is based on a study of boys, girls may be more likely to be missed. This could be down to things such as stereotypes and how the professional involved looks at ADHD based on the DSM.