



# Taking charge of your ADHD

## What is ADHD?

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that involves an ongoing struggle with inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. There is no known cause for ADHD, but it affects about 8-10% of kids in the United States. For many years, it was thought that only kids could have ADHD, but it has since been proven to go into adulthood.

## Three core symptoms of ADHD

If you have any of the below symptoms, talk to your doctor to get a correct diagnosis.

# 1.

### **Impulsivity (lack of self-control)**

It's hard to control yourself. Many actions are made on impulse.

- Speaks or does things without thinking.
- Puts themselves or others in danger without thinking of the consequences.
- Always wants to go first and won't give others a turn.

# 2.

### **Inattention (lack of focused attention)**

It's hard to pay attention. Staying focused is a challenge.

- Has a hard time following directions.
- Can't focus or listen.
- Easily distracted.

# 3.

### **Hyperactivity (too much movement)**

It's hard to be still.

- Moves constantly.
- Always getting up and out of their seat.
- Can't be quiet.

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## ADHD in children and adults

Of children diagnosed with ADHD, 30-80% will still have it as teenagers. And 60-70% will have it when they are adults. It's hard to know how many adults really have it. The symptoms are often confused with depression, substance use and other disorders.

Many adults try to manage their symptoms by self-medicating with stimulants or alcohol. They tend to lack impulse control, but don't seem to have as much of an issue with hyperactivity.

Adults with ADHD:

- Often forget appointments.
- Find it difficult to form lasting relationships.
- Are disorganized and can't prioritize.
- Have problems with short-term memory.

## Treatment

Medications only treat ADHD symptoms. They don't cure the disorder. But medication may help you function and learn better. Stimulants, such as Ritalin,<sup>®</sup> are used to treat ADHD. Non-stimulant medications are also becoming more available. Talk with your care provider to learn more about ADHD treatment options.

## Living with ADHD

If you've been diagnosed with ADHD, you've likely been dealing with symptoms for quite a while, and adapted to the changes. Some people benefit from basic organizational concepts and behavior management strategies to help manage their symptoms. Some people take medication. There is no right or wrong way. You have to find what works best for you.

## Here are some tools that may help

- **Take medicines as your told.** If you're taking any medicines for ADHD be sure to take them as prescribed. Missing a dose or taking two doses at once to catch up may be harmful. Talk to your health care provider if you have any bad side effects or other problems.
- **Get organized.** Train yourself to become more organized. Make lists of daily tasks and try to complete them. Do one thing at a time. Use a daily planner and leave notes for yourself. Set your alarm clock to help you remember appointments or other activities.
- **Manage impulsive behavior.** Do you tend to do things you later regret? Before acting, try counting to 10 while breathing slowly. Usually the impulse will pass as quickly as it appeared.
- **Reduce distractions.** Find ways to reduce the distractions throughout your day. If you find yourself getting sidetracked by loud music or the television, turn it off. Move yourself to a quieter place.
- **Find outlets for extra energy.** People with ADHD sometimes seem to have more nervous energy than others. Hobbies or exercising can be helpful.
- **Meditation.** Racing thoughts can cause big problems when trying to finish a project. Breathing or walking meditations can be helpful. Start with five minutes. The more you do it, the easier it gets.
- **Keep it simple.** Some days you've tried every tool that you have and nothing seems to work. On those days, it's OK to take a break. Work on a puzzle or play a game.



**Remember, not all people are the same. What might work for one person might not work for someone else. Do what works best for you.**