



ADHD Information Library

ADHD Medications, ADHD Diet, and Alternative Treatments

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What is ADHD ?

Submitted by ADD ADHD Inform... on Sun, 11/06/2011 - 06:52

"What is ADHD ?" **ADHD** is the short abbreviation for "**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder**", which is one of the most common *childhood behavior disorders*. It is estimated that somewhere between *5% and 9% of all children have ADHD*. Of all children referred to mental health professionals, more are referred for ADHD than for any other condition. But ADHD is also one of the most treatable of all psychiatric disorders, with several effective options ranging from medications to alternative therapies, psycho-social treatments, and educational interventions.

Those with ADHD can have problems in many of the areas of their life, including home, school, work, and in relationships. ADHD is a chronic and unrelenting problem. Though it will change in form through the years, it will persist into adulthood and impact all relationships including marriages, parenting, and work performance.

What is ADHD ?

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WHAT IS ADHD ?

"Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" or "ADHD" is a **neuro-biological disorder**. It is not the result of bad parenting, or watching too much T.V., or a lack of either discipline or love by parents. While any or all of these may exist and be problems, the ADHD would exist even if Ozzie and Harriet were the parents. ADHD has neuro-biological roots. There are very strong genetic factors that influence both brain function and development. There are many recent studies and imaging techniques that have demonstrated this over the past twenty years. There are also other potential contributing factors that might cause one to acquire ADHD problems, such as brain injuries received either in utero, or after birth, or high fevers from infections, and so on. While we would argue that head injuries should be classified as "head injuries" rather than as "ADHD", in most studies they are included as ADHD.

ADHD impacts individuals in four main areas of their life:

- What is Inattention in ADHD? - **Inattention** causes people to have problems paying attention to routine or boring tasks, or staying focused on a task long enough to finish the task, especially if the task is not very interesting. The person might be able to focus on interesting projects or entertainment such as video games for long periods of time, but it is the **mundain tasks of life** that are very difficult.
- What is Impulsivity in ADHD? - **Impulsivity** is a lack of self-control. Impulsive behaviors, or choices, can cause havoc in relationships, work, school, or life. Saying things, or doing things without thinking first, or considering the consequences, is a pretty classic symptom of ADHD in both children and adults.
- What is Hyperactivity in ADHD? - **Hyperactivity** is "excessive, non-goal directed, motor activity." Many (though not all) with ADHD are "bouncy" like Tigger, hyperactive, always "on the go," and restless. The standard line is that they act as if they are "driven by a motor." This is mostly seen in younger children, and this is the symptom most likely to be "outgrown" as one matures.
- **Easily Bored** - Unless the task is very stimulating, like a video game or TV program or outside playing, those with ADHD are often easily bored by a task - especially bored by homework, math tests, balancing checkbooks, or doing taxes, and many of these tasks just never get done.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a neurologically based disorder.

This position has become controversial as many would like to dismiss the diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder altogether saying that there is no evidence of neurological differences, or that there are no medical tests to diagnose ADD ADHD, or that the diagnostic criteria is too broad. But they would be wrong. There is an overwhelming amount of research to support the statement that, indeed, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a neurobiologically based condition. We discuss this in great detail in the [neurology of the ADHD brain](#) and offer plenty of [ADHD research information](#).

Brain imaging studies show that the brains of those with ADHD are different from those without ADHD in terms of size,

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activity, and development. Certain regions of the ADHD brain can be as much as 10% smaller than those without ADHD. And areas such as the frontal lobes, cerebellum, and anterior cingulate, can be very under-active compared to normal. These areas can also be as much as two to three years behind in development compared to normal. These differences will remain through the life of a person with ADHD.

ADHD impacts various systems of the brain, particularly systems involved with "executive functions", "inhibition", and "working memory". Most of these involve the activity of the frontal lobes, and the interaction of the frontal lobes with other structures of the brain acting as a "system". But since the frontal lobes are smaller, less active, and behind in development, each of these systems is impacted to some degree. As other areas of the brain are also affected, the look or type of ADHD is different.

ADHD is not the result of "bad parenting" or obnoxious, willful defiance on the part of the child.

Yes, a child may be willfully defiant whether he has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or not. Defiance, rebelliousness, and selfishness are more often "moral" issues than neurological issues. We make no excuses for "immoral," "selfish," or "destructive" behaviors, whether from individuals with ADD ADHD or not. It may be true that the child or teen's parents may need further or more in-depth training on parenting defiant children. We are constantly amazed at how many young parents today themselves grew up in homes where their own parents were gone all day. We now see "grown up latch key kids" trying to parent as best as they can, but without having had the benefit of growing up with good parental role models. This is a problem that can be solved with some training. But it is not Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is not ADHD. Conduct Disorder is not ADHD. However, there is a sub-group of people who have both ADHD and ODD, or ADHD and CD. This is a very difficult group to treat and as a group has a poor prognosis. This is explored in greater detail elsewhere here at the ADHD Information Library. This sub-group may be a completely different problem than ADHD or ODD by themselves.

Neurologically based, genetically rooted Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is what we explore here at the ADD ADHD Information Library where we try to answer the question, "what is adhd"?

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