

Other Mental Illnesses: Adult Attention Deficit Disorder

What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

This disorder has four defined subtypes:

1. **ADHD - Inattentive type** - an individual must experience at least 6 of the following characteristics:
 - a. Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
 - b. Difficulty sustaining attention
 - c. Does not appear to listen
 - d. Struggles to follow through on instructions
 - e. Difficulty with organization
 - f. Avoids or dislikes requiring sustained mental effort
 - g. Often loses things necessary for tasks
 - h. Easily distracted
 - i. Forgetful in daily activities
2. **ADHD - Hyperactive/Impulsive type** - an individual must experience at least 6 of the following characteristics:
 - a. Fidgets with hands/feet
 - b. Difficulty remaining seated
 - c. Feelings of restlessness
 - d. Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
 - e. Talks excessively
 - f. Blurts out answers before questions are completed
 - g. Difficulty waiting in turn taking situations
 - h. Interrupts or intrudes upon others
3. **ADHD - combined type** is defined by an individual meeting both sets of inattentive and hyperactive criteria.
4. **ADHD - not otherwise specified** is defined by an individual who demonstrates some characteristics but an insufficient number of symptoms to reach a full diagnosis. These symptoms disrupt everyday life.

Problems with Diagnosing ADHD in Adults

Many adults were not diagnosed with ADHD as children. Therefore, they are not aware of their disorder and its consequences. Diagnosing as an adult requires an examination of childhood, academic, and behavioral history. ADHD is often undiagnosed or misdiagnosed in adults, which can lead to low self-esteem, increased frustration, and educational/workplace failure. It can lead to depression and alcoholism or substance abuse

Treatment

Education of this disorder needs to be first and foremost, then other treatment methods can include:

- Structuring of the environment; use of an appointment book, a personal computer, or tape recorder. Making a list of tasks, setting schedules, learning time management skills, and setting up a self-reward system can also be helpful.
- Psychostimulant medications have shown to have positive effects 70-80% of the time.
- Vocational counseling designed to identify employment well-suited to the individual's strengths and skills can help ensure success.
- Exercising regularly.
- Cultivating a healthy sense of humor.
- Eliminating negative self talk.
- Avoiding or reducing alcohol and drug use.
- Enlisting a friend, relative, or spouse to help remember commitments and to provide feedback
- Psychotherapy may help address moodiness, personal relationships, and alleviate guilt and frustration.

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; community and professional mental health education and a newsletter for first-time parents available in both English and Spanish. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board and United Way of Central Ohio. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.