

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in adults

Patient information leaflet



## Introduction

This leaflet provides information about the condition Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), general management options and the Adult ADHD service. If you are not sure about anything in this leaflet please ask a member of staff.

## What does this diagnosis mean?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a condition that occurs during childhood and persists into adulthood.

The set of symptoms tend to fall into two main categories:

- inattentiveness
- hyperactivity and impulsiveness

Most people with ADHD have problems that fall into both these categories, but this isn't always the case. For example, some people with the condition may have problems with inattentiveness, but not with hyperactivity or impulsiveness.

Some of the symptoms that we frequently see are:

- carelessness and lack of attention to detail
- continually starting new tasks before finishing old ones
- poor organisational skills
- inability to focus or prioritise
- continually losing or misplacing things
- forgetfulness
- restlessness and edginess
- difficulty keeping quiet and speaking out of turn
- blurting out responses and often interrupting others
- mood swings, irritability and a quick temper
- extreme impatience

You may not have all of the above symptoms. We are particularly interested to know if and how these symptoms are affecting your day to day functioning at home/work/education/relationships/family/self-confidence etc. These will be discussed more with you following your assessment.

## I have come across other children and adults with ADHD, they appear different to me. Why is that?

This is because the presentation of ADHD can vary between individuals. It is said that at least 15-20% of children with ADHD maintain the full diagnosis into adulthood. As many as 65% will have some symptoms of ADHD as an adult. ADHD in adults is complicated as it usually presents with other mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, anger problems, personality difficulties, alcohol and substance use etc. and hence not all the difficulties that you present with can be strictly due to ADHD alone.

## What causes this condition?

- ADHD can be due to genes. Parents and siblings of ADHD children are on average 4-5 times more likely to have the disorder than the general population. It appears to involve some chemical pathways in the brain (dopamine and norepinephrine pathway).
- There are environmental associations of ADHD including maternal smoking and alcohol use, pregnancy complications, and socio-economic deprivation. Environmental factors may interact with genetic factors in causing ADHD.
- Neuroimaging studies have found changes consistent with neurodevelopmental abnormalities in some regions of the brain.

## What are the treatment options?

- In adults, there is evidence for efficacy for methylphenidate, dexamfetamine and atomoxetine. However, prescribing of some of these is unlicensed and drug treatment should not be initiated if diagnosis is uncertain or benefit is unlikely.
- A few psychological interventions for adult ADHD have been developed, but these are still under review.

Some patients find diagnosis helpful and education and self-help techniques may be sufficient to manage their difficulties.

## Will I need to take the medications long term?

There is no definite answer for this. This will depend on your ability to work or manage relationships in the longer term. Some people are able to manage life without the use of medications in the future. We will discuss all this with you in your annual reviews that will help you decide if you need to continue taking the medications.

## What help does the Adult ADHD service offer?

Our service in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust is primarily commissioned for medication treatments. We will help you choose the best medication option that is available for you and assist you in the process of getting the medication dose to the right level with frequent reviews (roughly monthly to begin with). After stabilisation of the dose, we will write to your GP to take over the prescriptions, and we will then see you on a less frequent basis. At each review, we will monitor the effects and side effects of the medication, your functioning and other changes, check your blood pressure, pulse and weight (if necessary).

## Can I have therapy for ADHD?

Our service is not commissioned for talking therapies. There is also not a lot of evidence to say that talking therapies are very effective. If the clinicians feel that you may benefit from talking therapies for any other associated mental health condition, they will discuss this with you. However, you may benefit from simple behavioural and lifestyle changes that will support medications. Please read helpful tips below.

## Can I have assistance for work?

The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) protects you at work and in education. Occupational Health Departments from most companies, with your permission, can write to us to request reports that will assist them in supporting you at work/education. University students may also be entitled to "reasonable adjustments" such as extra time in exams, extensions on coursework, and specialist mental health mentor support.

## Can I continue to drive?

As ADHD is a medical condition that can affect driving, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) advises that you notify them of this condition. Please visit the DVLA website for more details.

## Can I consume alcohol?

Alcohol is a depressant and can affect attention and concentration. While occasional drinking within the recommended limits may not be a problem under certain circumstances, this depends on the person, the type of medication they take (stimulants or non-stimulants), and when they took it last. Please discuss this with your nurse.

## What can I do to help myself?

a) Think about how your ADHD affects:

- how you think and feel?
- the people around you?

b) Lifestyle measures:

- Structured routines
- Incorporate exercise into daily routine
- Healthy food regimes
- Avoid excess use of fizzy drinks
- Cut down on alcohol
- Cut down and if possible stop smoking
- Avoid recreational drugs

c) Read about condition

- Driven to Distraction: Ed Hallowell & John Ratey: a book written by two American psychiatrists who themselves have ADHD.
- ADHD in Adults: A Psychological Guide to Practice: Susan Young & Jessica Bramham: a cognitive behavioural model of understanding ADHD - accompanied by a website, which provides downloadable self help materials.
- Royal College of Psychiatrist's website – <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/adhdinadults.aspx>
- NICE guidance for adults with ADHD – <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg72>

d) Other

- Peer support: Adult AD/HD Support Groups North East. <http://aadhd-ne-uk.weebly.com/>  
Contacts: Bill Scott (North and South) 07856 212 564 or 0191 496 7467  
aadhd\_ne@yahoo.co.uk
- Online forums: <https://aadduk.org/>

## How do I contact you, if I have any queries?

We work Monday to Friday, between hours of 9am and 5pm. If you have any further questions about the condition or treatment, please contact the office and either ask for your named nurse or the duty worker.

Keegan Court  
Grassbanks  
Gateshead  
Tyne and Wear  
NE10 8DX  
Tel: 0191 287 6250

If you are worried about any issues in relation to your safety or of others, please contact the crisis team/GP/emergency services

## References

- Nutt DJ, Fone K, Asherson P. et al. (2007) Evidence-based guidelines for management of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in adolescents in transition to adult services and in adults: recommendation from the British Association for Psychopharmacology. *Journal of Psychopharmacology* 21: 10-41. Proposed BAP extended symptom checklist for adult ADHD
- <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/adhdinadults.aspx> (accessed 30.3.17)
- UK NICE guidelines on ADHD in children, young people and adults
- <https://aadduk.org/symptoms-diagnosis-treatment/symptoms/> (accessed 30.3.17)

## What if I have a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint about the service?

If you want to make a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint you can:

- talk to the people directly involved in your care
- ask a member of staff for a feedback form, or complete a form on the Trust website [www.ntw.nhs.uk](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk) (click on the 'Contact Us' tab)
- telephone the Complaints Department Tel: 0191 245 6672
- email [complaints@ntw.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@ntw.nhs.uk) Please note that information sent to the Trust via email is sent at your own risk
- We are always looking at ways to improve services. Your feedback allows us to monitor the quality of our services and act upon issues that you bring to our attention. You can provide feedback in the following ways:
  - the quickest way for you to do this is to complete our short online survey at [www.ntw.nhs.uk/poy](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/poy)
  - complete a Points of You survey, available on wards, reception areas or from staff.
  - some areas of the Trust have electronic feedback touch screens, staff can help you to use these.

## Contact information

Keegan Court  
Grassbanks  
Gateshead  
Tyne and Wear  
NE10 8DX  
Tel: 0191 287 6250



Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 246 7288

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