Adult Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is one of the most researched health conditions in the United States. You may have heard of AD/HD associated with children who can't sit still, have short attention spans, or suffer from impulsive behavior problems. However, many adults also suffer from AD/HD. Most of them don't know it.

What is AD/HD?

There are many symptoms of AD/HD, but most are rooted in three broad behavioral categories: impulsive behavior, short attention span, and often hyperactivity. About 3 to 5 percent of children in the United States suffer from AD/HD. Many are helped, but only about one-third experience a permanent reduction in their symptoms by adulthood. Most continue to have symptoms of the disorder and, if not properly managed, these symptoms may contribute to many different life problems.

What Is the Cause of AD/HD?

The exact cause of AD/HD is unknown, but it is believed to be primarily a neurobiological disorder with a strong hereditary component. It is not uncommon for a parent to self-diagnose their own AD/HD in the process of getting help for a child with the disorder. Although there is no genetic marker or test for AD/HD, the disorder's existence has been well established.

Life Problems – Symptoms of AD/HD

Think about your life at home and at work. Have you experienced repeated frustration sticking to repetitive and tedious tasks, or the inability to plan and organize your work? Have you suffered from excessive procrastination? Have impulsive or [illegible] behaviors contributed to disciplinary actions, [illegible] and intrusion on coworkers, conflicts with others, and [illegible] changes? Have you had trouble with romantic relationships because of your impulsive behavior? Do you think of yourself as a fun-loving person, a "big kid," or a well-meaning but "hyper" person who "other people just don't understand"? Has your self-esteem suffered as a result of these experiences? If so, you may want to learn more about the symptoms of AD/HD, whether or not you suffer from this disorder, and what you can do about it.

How is AD/HD Diagnosed?

The diagnosis of AD/HD is made by an experienced professional or several different professionals who interview the patient or client to determine the pervasiveness of symptoms in a wide range of life functions. AD/HD symptoms adversely affect home and work life, so reports by family members are often key to helping professionals make the AD/HD diagnosis. All people experience periods of impulsiveness, hyperactivity, or inattentiveness at some point in their lives, but when these behaviors become pervasive, long-term, and affect life functioning, the existence of AD/HD is a possibility. Further evidence that symptoms have persisted since childhood strongly confirms the diagnosis.

The following symptoms can give you an indication of whether you should seek further evaluation for the possibility of AD/HD. The inability to pay attention to details, problems sustaining attention, not listening, losing things, avoiding tasks that require mental effort, distractibility, forgetfulness in daily activities, feeling restless, feeling on the go as if "driven by a motor," fidgeting, hyperactivity, interrupting and intruding upon others, and talking excessively.

Some illegal drug users with AD/HD have accidentally discovered temporary relief from symptoms, but drug abuse compounds problems associated with AD/HD. This "self-medicating" can be a clue to the existence of the diagnosis. Alcoholism and drug addictions, however, are primary illnesses

How is AD/HD Treated?

[illegible]atment for AD/HD is designed to prevent [illegible] disruptive behavioral and cognitive symptoms and consequent life problems. A variety of medications are commonly used and are very effective. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is also very useful, along with education about the symptoms of the disorder and how to manage them.

What the EAP Can Do

[illegible]ue to discuss concerns or problems that [illegible] AD/HD, and can give you more [illegible] symptoms. The EAP can also refer you to [illegible]fessionals in your community who have [illegible]xperience diagnosis and treatment of AD/HD.

This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your health care provider or EAP for advice about a personal concern or medical condition.

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