

Group #2: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Fact Sheet)

What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is the most commonly diagnosed behavioural disorder of childhood.

ADHD affects an estimated 4 -6 % of young people between the ages of 9 and 20. Boys are two to three times more likely than girls to develop ADHD. Although ADHD is usually associated with children and teens, the disorder can persist into adulthood. People with ADHD are easily distracted by sights, sounds, and other features of their environment. They cannot concentrate for long periods of time, are restless and impulsive, or have a tendency to daydream and be slow to complete tasks.

Symptoms

The three predominant symptoms of ADHD are 1) difficulty regulating activity level (hyperactivity), 2) difficulty attending to sustained tasks (inattention), and 3) impulsivity.

Common symptoms include the following:

- Brief sustained attention span
- Increased activity - always on the go
- Impulsive - does not stop to think
- Social and relationship problems
- Takes undue risks
- Sleep problems
- Normal or high intelligence but under-performing at school

All must occur with greater frequency and intensity than in other people of the same age and must lead to functional impairment as a result of the symptoms in order to be considered ADHD.

What Causes ADHD?

While no one really knows what causes ADHD, it is generally agreed by the medical and scientific community that ADHD is due to problems in the brain's control of systems that regulate concentration, motivation, planning and attention.

Much of today's research suggests that genetics play a major role in ADHD. The possibility of a genetic cause of ADHD is supported by the fact that ADHD runs in families. About 70% of children with ADHD have a first-degree relative with ADHD. Approximately half of parents who have been diagnosed with ADHD themselves will have a child with ADHD.

However, not every person with ADHD can be explained by genetics; there are other causes of ADHD.

MODULE 3C

Activity #4 Handout

Researchers have suggested that some of the following could also be responsible for ADHD symptoms:

- exposure to toxins (such as lead)
- injuries to the brain (such as a concussion)
- a traumatic birth process

Many people with ADHD will also have a specific learning difficulty, such as problems with spelling, mathematics, etc. Some studies suggest that about 30% of adolescents with ADHD may have a learning difficulty.

Myths, Misunderstandings and Facts

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, ADHD is not caused by:

- Too much TV
- Sugar
- Caffeine
- Food colourings
- Poor home life
- Poor schools
- Food allergies

How can ADHD be treated?

A variety of medications and behavioural interventions are used to treat ADHD. The most effective treatments are medications. The most widely used medications are stimulants such as methylphenidate. Nine out of ten children improve when taking one of these medications. These medications are safe when used as prescribed by qualified physicians. Some common side effects are decreased appetite and insomnia. These side effects generally occur early in treatment and often decrease over time. Some studies have shown that the stimulants used to treat ADHD slow growth rate, but ultimate height is not affected. Medication treatment reduces risk of substance abuse and traffic accidents as well.

Other interventions used to help treat ADHD include several forms of psychotherapy such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, social skills training, support groups, and parent and educator skills training. A combination of medication and psychotherapy may be more effective than medication treatment alone in improving social skills, parent-child relations, reading achievement and aggressive symptoms.

For more information on ADHD, check out:

www.teenmentalhealth.org/product/tmh-speaks-adhd/

Group #2: Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Reporting Page)

What is ADHD?

How common is ADHD?

Describe some of the symptoms of ADHD:

What type of treatment is available for people experiencing ADHD?

What other kinds of support can help people with ADHD recover?