

# ADHD

## Grown-ups Have It Too!

When it comes to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), you probably picture overactive children who can't concentrate in class. But, the truth is, those kids grow up, often undiagnosed, only to continue struggling with the same inattention problems in their professional and personal lives. Here, DR ZHENG ZIMIN, consultant psychiatrist at Nobel Psychological Wellness Centre, tells us more about ADHD in adults – and what to do if you're suffering from inattention and impulsivity symptoms.

BY AMY GREENBURG



### What exactly is ADHD?

It's a neurodevelopmental disorder that manifests with symptoms associated with hyperactivity, inattention and impulsivity. The disorder occurs at birth, affecting people during childhood and often into adulthood. The symptoms can cause difficulties in daily functioning and living.

While studies have shown genetic factors to be a major contributor to the onset of ADHD, there may be other factors at play too. These include premature birth, brain injury and exposure to toxins during pregnancy.

### How do ADHD symptoms differ for adults?

Symptoms tend to reduce in severity in adulthood, especially those related to hyperactivity. However, adults suffering from ADHD can continue to experience challenges with inattention and impulsivity.

Many individuals with adult ADHD may not realise their symptoms during childhood but develop awareness later in life when they continue to face persistent challenges. Disorganisation, poor time management and procrastination are common symptoms that pose difficulties in carrying out everyday tasks. Individuals with ADHD may also face problems in interpersonal relationships as a result of difficulties with emotional regulation and low frustration tolerance.



### Does ADHD need to be treated?

If untreated, ADHD can have a long-lasting, negative impact on self-esteem and social functioning. Individuals suffering from symptoms are often labelled as “defiant” or “scatter-brained” very early on, and may be ostracised by others for their behavioural and learning difficulties. Adult sufferers often feel misunderstood, experience a poor sense of self-worth, and struggle with the demands of career and social interactions.

What's more, individuals who experience significant impairment in functioning due to symptoms of ADHD may also develop anxiety and depressive disorders. There is also research that links individuals with ADHD to increased rates of substance and alcohol misuse.

Treating ADHD can help control clinical symptoms, which could ultimately translate to higher levels of daily functioning, improved self-confidence and better quality of life. While behavioural interventions and parent training are usually the mainstay treatment options for younger children, treatment options for adults typically include medication, psychological treatment or a combination of both. Medication for ADHD is closely supervised by the prescribing physician and is only prescribed for individuals who have been clinically diagnosed with the condition.

### How is ADHD diagnosed?

To diagnose ADHD, a detailed psychiatric interview is required to gather information with regards to symptoms under the three domains of hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention. In adults, a childhood history is key to confirming the onset of symptoms before the age of 12; this type of information can be obtained through school report books and corroborative history from caregivers.

What's more, the impairment must occur in more than one daily-life setting – for example, school and home, or work and home – for diagnosis to be confirmed. *✉*

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