



# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Amany Sakr\*

Department of Clinical Pathology, Cairo University, Egypt

## Definition

ADHD is a behavioral disorder present at early age of life and may improve with age or continue to adult stage causing problems to the affected person, mostly can be easily diagnosed from age 6 years to 12 years when the child begin his scholastic achievement . It is manifested by triad of (Inattentiveness, hyperactivity & impulsiveness) and can be accompanied by sleep disturbance, depression, Tourette syndrome and anxiety disorders and misdiagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD).

## Symptoms

### During childhood

#### 1. Inattentiveness

- a. Short attention span and easily distracted.
- b. Careless mistakes, forgetful or losing things.
- c. Unable to stick to the same task for a long time.
- d. Tending to resist instructions and cannot organize tasks easily.

#### 2. Hyperactivity and impulsiveness

- a. Unable to sit still for long time, too much fidgeting.
- b. Difficult concentration on tasks and interrupts conversations.
- c. Excessive physical movement and talkativeness.
- d. Unable to wait for his/her turn and give quick response.

#### All the above symptoms can cause

- a. Significant problems in a child's life.
- b. Poor scholastic achievement due to learning difficulties as dyslexia.
- c. Poor social interaction with others.
- d. Personal isolation, depression, health problems due to prolonged sleep disturbance and dietetic problems.

### During adulthood

- a. Symptoms of ADHD are present during early life in childhood and are developed along adult life.
- b. Additional problems as dyslexia or depression experienced during childhood with ADHD may also continue into adulthood affecting their life through different ways.
- c. Researchers recorded that inattentiveness increases with age as life stresses are increasing, the contrast with hyperactivity that appears to decrease with aging.

#### All the above symptoms can cause

- a. Decrease attention to details due to inability to focus constantly.
- b. Difficulty to keep quiet, and don't respect turn.
- c. Often interrupting others and also is easily interrupted leading to poor social relationships.
- d. Impatience, forgetfulness, carelessness, restlessness, mood swings & irritability in an extreme way.

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### \*Correspondence:

Amany Sakr, Department of Clinical Pathology, Ministry of Health, Cairo University, Egypt;

E-mail: amany sakr2@gmail.com

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- e. Legal problems due to dangerous activities with no caution for personal safety.
- f. Depression, obsessive compulsive disorders, personality disorders and anxiety disorders.
- g. Inability to deal with problems due to his/her poor organizational skills.
- h. Starting new tasks before finishing previous ones.

## Diagnosis

### History taking

#### 1. Present history

When symptoms started, where symptoms occur (home/school), whether symptoms affect child's daily life (social problems) or not.

#### 2. Past history

- a. If any recent accident occurs in the family (death/failure or divorce).
- b. If there is any similar condition in the family.
- c. If there is any other problems or symptoms of different health conditions.

### Assessment

From the concept that ADHD is a whole family problem, so when suspecting that the child is having this disorder, we suggest a period of observation of about continuous 10 weeks to estimate the results of symptom developing (progress, stable/regress) after good training of parents through different educational programmes by SLP (Speech Language Pathologist) [1]. They may need psychological rehabilitation by psychiatrist through physical examination to exclude other possible conditions, series of interviews with the child & his/her parent & reports or tests as Conners Assessment by specialist.

#### Formal assessment rules:

- a. Symptoms started to begin before the age of 12 years.
- b. Symptoms are in at least 2 different settings (home & school) to exclude that the behavior is just a reaction to certain persons or situations.
- c. Symptoms are continuously for at least 6 months.
- d. The child must have 6 or more symptoms of inattentiveness, or 6 or more symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsiveness.
- e. Diagnosis of ADHD in adults cannot be confirmed except symptoms were present from childhood because ADHD cannot develop for the first time in adults (legal, relationship or educational problems).

### Treatment

#### 1. Medication

- 5 types of medications are present: Methylphenidate (most common), lisdexamfetamine, atomoxetine, Dexamfetamine & guanfacine.
- These medications are taken temporary to decrease impulsiveness, increase the attention span, and improve quietness and learning new skills.

- Can be taken every day or just on school days by increasing the dose gradually. Treatment breaks are advised. Medications are taken under doctor supervision [2].

#### 2. Behavior therapy

- Behavior management for child: to encourage good behaviors, such as sitting at the table to eat. The child is rewarded for good behavior.
- Behavior management for teachers: involves learning how to plan (504 plan & IEP) and structure activities (daily activity cards), and to praise and encourage children for even very small amounts of progress.
- Parent training and education programmes: (usually arranged in groups of around 10 to 12 parents. A program usually consists of 10 to 16 meetings, lasting up to 2 h each.
- Social skills training: it involves the child taking part in role-play situations and aims to teach him how to behave in social situations by learning how their behavior affects others (structured themes).

#### 3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

CBT is a (talking therapy; individually/in groups) to manage the problem by changing the way you think and behave. A therapist would try to change how the child feels about certain situation, which would in turn potentially change their behavior.

#### 4. Psychological therapy

Is effective to manage comorbidity disorders, like conduct or anxiety disorders (calming box, counting from 1 to 10, taking deep breath and boxing)? [3-6].

#### 5. Other possible treatments

- a. Diet: ADHD persons are advised to eat healthy.
- b. Balanced diets: It was found that there may be a link between type of food and prognosis of symptoms.
- c. Omega-3 fatty acids: may be beneficial for relieving those with ADHD.
- d. Local support groups: help to stop parent feeling of isolation and coping difficulty.

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