

ADHD Patient Handout

What is ADHD?

ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is a common neurodevelopment condition that affects how a person:

- Pays attention
- Controls impulses
- Regulates energy levels

Key Features: People with ADHD may experience a combination of:

Inattention

- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty focusing
- Easily distracted

Hyperactivity

- Restlessness
- Fidgeting
- Trouble sitting still

Impulsivity

- Acting without thinking
- Interrupting others
- Impatience

Prevalence: Approximately 5% children, 2-3% of adults

What Causes ADHD?

ADHD is linked to differences in brain development and how neurotransmitters (such as dopamine) function. It often runs in families.

Who Does It Affect?

- Symptoms usually begin in childhood (before age 12)
- Many people continue to experience ADHD into adulthood
- It affects both children and adults, though symptoms may look different with age

Is It Treatable?

Yes. ADHD can be effectively managed with:

- **Behavioral strategies** (organization tools, routines)
- **Therapy** (such as cognitive behavioral therapy)
- **Medication** (when appropriate)

Diagnosis

ADHD is a neurodevelopment difference, and diagnosis requires a multi-step assessment process.

This may include:

- Detailed medical and developmental history
- Questionnaires and screening tools
- Input (“collateral”) from family members, teachers, or partners

To be diagnosed:

- Symptoms must be present **before age 12**
- Symptoms must affect **two or more areas of life** (e.g., school, work, social, family)

Not everyone with ADHD symptoms requires medication.

Some people benefit from coaching, therapy, or skills-based training

Assessment Process

You may be asked to:

- Complete questionnaires (for yourself or your child)
- Provide input from **2 collateral sources**
- Undergo medical screening before medication, including:
 - Blood tests
 - ECG
 - Blood pressure check

Treatment

Medication

The **gold standard treatment** for ADHD is stimulant medication. There are two main categories:

- Amphetamine-based medications
- Methylphenidate-based medications (e.g., Ritalin)

Response rates:

- ~33% respond better to one type
- ~33% to the other
- ~33% respond to either

Dosing approach:

- Start low
- Gradually increase (titrate)
- Adjust based on benefits vs. side effect

Common Side Effects

- Feeling over stimulated
- Decreased appetite
- Difficulty sleeping

Tips:

- Take medication in the morning

- Eat high-protein meals when appetite allows
- For sleep: melatonin or magnesium (if appropriate)

Co-Occurring Conditions

If another condition is present (e.g., anxiety), it is often treated first, since stimulant medication can sometimes worsen anxiety.

Resources

- CADDRA
- How to ADHD- YouTube channel
- ADDitude- Online Resource for ADHD
- Kelty Mental Health (“Rolling with ADHD” program)- parenting program

Forms (Adults should fill all four, children only the first two)

Weiss Symptom Record: <https://surl.li/aqvpju>

Weiss Functional Report: <https://surl.li/usdtaz>

ASRS (Adults Only): <https://surl.li/zvkdld>

PHQ/GAD (Adults Only): <https://surl.li/sjdtfb>

Please submit forms to admin@sgmc.ca