

The most widely used medications to treat ADHD include:

- **Stimulants.** Stimulant meds work for 70% to 80% of people. They're used to treat moderate and severe ADHD. They may be helpful for children, teens, and adults who have a hard time at school, work, or home. Some are approved for children over age 3, and others for children over age 6. **Side effects** of short-acting stimulants include loss of appetite, weight loss, sleep problems, crankiness, and tics. Amphetamine and methylphenidate stimulants may put you at risk of drug abuse and may lead to heart and psychiatric problems.
- **Non-stimulants.** In cases where stimulants don't work or cause unpleasant side effects, non-stimulants might help. These medications can improve symptoms like concentration and impulse control.
- **Antidepressants.** People with ADHD often have depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder too. They may take an antidepressant to control other mental health conditions along with a stimulant for ADHD.

**For more information on ADHD** and other mental illnesses, please contact any of the following:

NAMI Flagstaff at [www.namiflagstaff.org](http://www.namiflagstaff.org)

NAMI Arizona at [www.namiarizona.org](http://www.namiarizona.org)

NAMI National at [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

**For research,** visit: National Institute of Mental Health  
at [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

**For info on medications,** visit [www.medweb.com](http://www.medweb.com)



## ADHD

**What is ADHD?** Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition characterized by inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. The most commonly diagnosed behavior disorder in young people. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that ADHD affects an estimated 9 percent of children aged 3-17 and 2-4 percent of adults. ADHD has its onset and is usually diagnosed in childhood, but often persists into adolescence and adulthood and is frequently not diagnosed until later years.

There are actually thought to be three different types of ADHD, each with different symptoms: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive/impulsive and combined. Diagnosing ADHD requires a comprehensive evaluation and cannot be done with one single test.

### Symptoms of predominantly inattentive type

- fail to pay close attention to details or make careless mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities
- have difficulty sustaining attention to tasks or leisure activities; do not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- do not follow through on instructions and fail to finish schoolwork, chores or duties in the workplace
- have difficulty organizing tasks and activities

- avoid, dislike or are reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort
- lose things necessary for tasks or activities
- are easily distracted by extraneous stimuli and are forgetful in daily activities

**Those living with the predominantly hyperactive/ impulsive type often :**

- fidget with their hands or feet or squirm in their seat
- leave their seat when remaining seated is expected
- move excessively or feel restless during situations in which such behavior is inappropriate
- have difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly
- are "on the go," talk excessively or act as if "driven by a motor"
- blurt out answers before questions have been completed, have difficulty awaiting their turn and interrupt or intrude on others

**Those living with the combined type** (the most common type of ADHD) have a combination of the inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms.

**CAUSES**

While we don't know for sure what causes ADHD, we do know that ADHD probably results from a combination of genetic and environmental factors. ADHD is a brain-based disorder and is strongly inherited. Parenting styles do **not** cause ADHD.

**DIAGNOSIS**

Diagnosing ADHD requires a comprehensive evaluation and cannot be done with one single test. A licensed health professional will compile information about the child's academic, social and emotional functioning as well as rule out physical factors that could be causing symptoms similar to ADHD. Other factors such as anxiety, depression and some learning disorders may cause similar symptoms as ADHD and may also coexist with ADHD.

Parents and teachers can provide an important history of the child's behavior and when appropriate, so can the child. While the health professional will pay more attention to a child's behavior in more structured settings, the child's age must also be taken into account. It is important to note if the child's behavior interferes with their day to day life and how often the behavior occurs.

**LIVING WITH ADHD**

**Children and Adolescents:** ADHD may affect each child or youth differently, but it is important to consider such areas as school, coexisting conditions and parenting strategies.

**Adults:** Relationships and work are two areas that may be affected in an adult living with ADHD. Learn about your legal rights related to workplace modifications and cultural issues that may affect your experience learning to work with ADHD.

**TREATMENT**

A key aspect of treating ADHD is taking a "multimodal" approach utilizing medical, educational, behavioral and psychological methods.