

Is it ADHD fact sheet for children:

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It can be hard to find information about ADHD. For a very long time ADHD was seen as a 'naughty boy' syndrome. This is not the case !! I have compiled some easy to read information, and the diagnostic criteria looked for in diagnosing ADHD. I have broken down this pack into females and males, as it can appear very differently for each sex.

ADHD diagnostic criteria:

First let's look at the diagnostic criteria as set out by the DSM (diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders). I know this may sound like a lot of really weird letters thrown together, but this explanation will be in human terms, so don't panic.

For someone to meet the criteria to be diagnosed they have to meet 6 areas of the below form in either the hyperactivity and impulsively section and the inattention section, in more than one setting. I will expand on this but first lets look at the diagnostic criteria:

PART A	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
How often do you have trouble wrapping up the final details of a project, once the challenging parts have been done?					
How often do you have difficulty getting things in order when you have to do a task that requires organization?					
How often do you have problems remembering appointments or obligations?					

When you have a task that requires a lot of thought, how often do you avoid or delay getting started?					
How often do you fidget or squirm with your hands or feet when you have to sit down for a long time?					
How often do you feel overly active and compelled to do things, like you were driven by a motor?					
PART B					
How often do you make careless mistakes when you have to work on a boring or difficult project?					
How often do you have difficulty keeping your attention when you are doing boring or repetitive work?					
How often do you have difficulty concentrating on what people say to you, even when they are speaking to you directly?					

How often do you misplace or have difficulty finding things at home or at work?					
How often are you distracted by activity or noise around you?					
How often do you leave your seat in meetings or in other situations in which you are expected to stay seated?					
How often do you feel restless or fidgety?					
How often do you have difficulty unwinding and relaxing when you have time to yourself?					
How often do you find yourself talking too much when you are in social situations?					
When you're in a conversation, how often do you find yourself finishing the sentences of the people you are talking to, before they can finish it themselves?					

How often do you have difficulty waiting your turn in situations when turn taking is required?					
How often do you interrupt others when they are busy?					

Looking at the above form, the boxes coloured orange are the Inattentive domain, and the boxes coloured pink are the hyperactive/impulsive domain. The boxes marked in grey are where this criteria is being met, and the boxes marked in white are where the criteria is not being met. As a part of the assessment you will be asked to complete this simple tick box. I know this tick box does not allow for expansion but this is to give the assessor an overall idea of how you are meeting criteria. Later on in the assessment you will be able to expand on this.

If assessing a child, we will be looking to have the child complete this form, a parent to complete this form, and a school teacher to complete this form. We do not expect all answers to match in order to go forward for an assessment, we are looking for similarities.

This tick box is provided for children male and female and for adults male and female. We will look later on in this pack at the areas where a male and female differ and what we are looking for in these situations.

Hyperactivity/impulsivity and inattention:

Lets first look at the inattention section: (So these are the orange boxes in the above form)

Inattention in ADHD means: As referred to by the NHS uk website:

- having a short attention span and being easily distracted
- making careless mistakes - for example, in schoolwork
- appearing forgetful or losing things
- being unable to stick to tasks that are tedious or time-consuming
- appearing to be unable to listen to or carry out instructions
- constantly changing activity or task
- having difficulty organising tasks

Masking in one setting:

These symptoms need to be visible in more than one setting, so you need to be able see these symptom's in your child in the home, and in school. However we do make allowances for masking off behaviours in one setting. So if this is the case you would be looking for signs of:

- Is withdrawn.
- Has low self-esteem.
- Appears emotional and very sensitive.
- Struggles to focus.
- Talks a lot.

If you think your child is masking in their school setting, we would recommend speaking with their class teacher, and asking them to observe behaviours, and symptoms over a period of time. Again we do not need to match all symptoms to both settings, we are looking for a pattern in behaviours.

Something to consider as well, is children in primary school will have a lot of their needs met by parents and teaching staff, and it can be when they arrive at high school that the symptoms start to appear. This can be due to the higher pressures of high school, having to do things by themselves: walking to different classrooms, managing time, homework, higher work levels. As well as the arrival of hormones and the impact this has on a child with ADHD.

Another thing to consider is if your Childs symptoms are apparent in school but not in the home, is their parent meeting all of the Childs needs in the home. Are you organising everything for them, are you managing all aspects of their life, so they don't need to do things for themselves. If you were not to manage these needs for them would they be able to do these tasks on their own? For example if you do not sit with your child and monitor their homework, will they be able to complete it by themselves with out distraction. If you do not help your child tidy their room would they be able to do it ? If you did not pack their school bag, would they remember all the needed items?

Now lets look at the hyperactivity section: (these are the pink boxes on the above form):

- being unable to sit still, especially in calm or quiet surroundings
- constantly fidgeting
- being unable to concentrate on tasks
- excessive physical movement
- excessive talking
- being unable to wait their turn
- acting without thinking
- interrupting conversations

- little or no sense of danger

Your child can be just hyperactive ADHD, they can be just Inattention ADHD, or they can be combined type ADHD which means they meet both sections of the criteria. It is more common to see the Hyperactive symptoms in males, but that does not always prove to be the case.

If speaking to the class teacher about hyperactive behaviours, you will be asking about juggling in their chair, asking for a lot of bathroom breaks, wandering around the classroom, running in the hallways, struggling to calm when returning from break and lunch time. Shouting out in the classroom, speaking loudly, struggling with quiet time.

And in the home think about things like how are they when sitting at the dinner table, do they keep getting up, are they bouncing around in their chair. What about when they watch tv, are they flicking through endless programmes unable to focus on one thing, are they fidgeting around in their seat, and disturbing others with their talking and movement. For teens this may be things like “doom scrolling” endlessly on their phone through things like YouTube shorts. Can they sit and play one game with one toy for long periods of time, or are they always changing their games, and toys. How are they with friends, do they have good friendship groups or are they often arguing or changing friend groups. What about extra curricula clubs, are they joining and then ending quickly and wanting to do something new.

These are just some examples of behaviours you may be able to see, and they are things you will need to consider before their assessment. Do other family members comment on your Childs behaviours, how are their behaviours in comparison to their friends or other children in your family.

ADHD in females:

ADHD in girls can really differ from ADHD in boys. With girls it is often (but not always) that they only have signs of inattention. A lot of the time ADHD in girls goes unnoticed because they mask in settings, so rather than showing their behaviours in school they keep them inside, and this can be seen in expected grades not being what their total grades are. Struggles in their friendship groups.

To repeat what was said above ADHD in girls can look like :

- Is withdrawn.
- Has low self-esteem.
- Appears emotional and very sensitive.
- Struggles to focus.
- Talks a lot.
- Making a lot of mistakes.
- Being easily distracted.
- Finding it hard to organise themselves and their work.
- Appearing forgetful.
- Losing things.
- Fidgeting.
- Struggling to stay in their seat.

- Talking a lot.
- Interrupting people.
- Answering questions before giving others a chance.

This does not mean that only girls can experience ADHD in this way, this can also impact males the same, but historically speaking it is more likely to be a pattern in females.

What age should my child be?:

ADHD symptoms need to have been visible before the age of 12 for a diagnosis to be made. And the symptoms need to have been consistent for a period of time, and not something that has been noticed in only the previous 6 months.

ADHD in Teens:

Something that is really common is to see symptoms become enhanced or clearer when your child becomes a teen. As said above this could be due to higher expectations from school and home. This could also be because of hormones.

For any individual, becoming a teenager is a difficult time. Our metabolic rate changes, we experience growth spurts, our reproduction organs develop and our hormones affect our mood. However, this can be an even more difficult time for individuals with ADHD.

The hormones we produce during puberty can affect someone's ADHD symptoms including increased moodiness, irritability, and less ability to focus. During growth spurts, some additional body weight may be gained and consequently increase in medication may be necessary.

Stephen Hinshaw studied girls with ADHD and found that teenage girls with ADHD tended to have more academic problems, more aggressive behaviour, and earlier signs of substance abuse compared to their peers. This may explain why some girls with ADHD find that during their teenage years their medication is not as effective. Furthermore, unlike boys with ADHD who would act out, girls with ADHD would often internalise their problems and consequently be overlooked.

Because of this, females with ADHD may often go overlooked until they reach adulthood and start to address symptoms themselves.

Homeschooling and ADHD:

For parents of children who are home-schooled this may seem like an endless battle. However if you can separate your children's behaviours from home and learning then you will be able to see the behaviours in more than one setting. In simple terms address their behaviours in teacher mode, and then in parent mode.

ADHD in males:

1. Difficulty with Self-Directed Talk

Not always hearing that internal dialog or 'brain coach.' When your brain works with ADHD, the volume on your brain coach is turned down too low. The self-directed talk is there; they just aren't hearing it very well.

2. Hyperfocusing on Things That Are Interesting and Difficulty Sustaining Attention on Things That Are Not

Being able to intensely focus on one thing.

3. Weak Episodic Memory

Difficulty remembering past experiences and the emotions associated with those past experiences. If you've explained something to your son, and he says he doesn't remember how to do it, that may be true.

4. Poor Future Thinking Skills

Difficulty visualising things in the future because they tend to live in the present. If you've ever said to your son, 'If you do your homework every night this week, you can have a reward on Friday night,' and it didn't work, it was because the reward was too far in the future.

5. Difficulty Sensing the Passage of Time

People with ADHD have difficulty feeling time as a concrete concept. Often, they will spend more time arguing about a task than it would actually take to do the task because they have difficulty conceptualising how much time is required.

6. Inconsistent Situational Awareness

Difficulty understanding the bigger picture because they focus on the small details, they will likely have difficulty with situational awareness."

7. Poor Perspective Taking Skills

Trouble reading social cues, it means he really has trouble with perspective taking – understanding other's thoughts and feelings, and understanding how he comes

across to others. It's not that your son lacks empathy; it's that he lacks perspective taking skills.

8. Trouble Putting Problem Size in a Relevant Context

Over-react or under-react to the size of the problem.

9. Difficulty with Unexpected Change

When they have to do something like get off video games to start homework, that is really challenging because they are going from a preferred task to a non-preferred task without time to prepare for that.

10. Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria

React strongly to perceived or actual rejection. People with ADHD tend to live in big emotions and have a strong reaction to received rejection. The opposite of this is Recognition Response Euphoria. People with ADHD tend to be very responsive to praise and recognition when it is purposeful and helps a child recognise their strengths in themselves – not when it is empty.

Again these symptoms are not just restricted to males they may be visible in females.

Moving forward and preparing for an ADHD assessment:

Be prepared for a long wait. The current UK waiting times are 2 years + This does not mean you cannot do anything to support your child in the mean time. Speak to the ADHD assessor about school accommodations that do not need a government plan to be put in place. Start making changes to how you parent in order to better support the child based on this pending diagnosis.

Be understanding, be compassionate, and be strong. It can be really hard raising a child with ADHD, so reach out to online or local support groups for parents and carers. Look at private counselling for yourself and for your child. Keep up to date on ADHD news and support. And become aware of co-occurring conditions, these are things that are often alongside ADHD, for example autism, tics, rejection sensitivity disorder, conduct disorder, the list goes on.

Open lines of communication with your Childs school, will really support both you and your child going forward. Make sure the school are making reasonable changes to support your child in this waiting period of time. Don't be ashamed of talking to your Childs school about difficulties you may currently be facing as they may be able to provide extra support in the home, with organisations like early help. Don't feel judged, it is not your fault that your child has ADHD, a lot of parents blame themselves, or feel judged by schools and peers. There is no shame in your child having ADHD and as we raise more awareness we gain more understanding. A fact that not many people know is that 1 in 20 people will have ADHD diagnosed or undiagnosed. And do not fear labels, by having a diagnosis you are better able to understand and support your child. 50% of children with ADHD will grow out of the condition, by better understanding their symptoms and where they struggle they are able to make adaptations to change these and support themselves into adulthood.

Famous people with ADHD:

Speaking to your child about what is happening for them can be incredibly difficult, here is a list of some celebrities with ADHD to show just how amazing we can and will be:

Emma Watson (Harry Potter)

Ant McPartlin (Ant from Ant and Dec)

Jamie Oliver (Chef)

Bill Gates (Founder of Microsoft)

Walt Disney (Animator and producer)

Ryan Gosling (Actor)

Michael Phelps (swimmer)

Channing Tatum (Actor)

Richard Bacon (Tv presenter)

Albert Einstein (Physicist & Mathematician)

Simone Biles (American gymnast)

Johnny Depp (Actor and musician)

Justin Timberlake (Actor and musician)

Dave Grohl (Actor and musician)

will.i.am (Tv presenter and singer in black-eyed peas)

Scott Kelly (astronaut)

Adam Levine (Actor and singer or Maroon 5)

James Carville (political strategist)