

# FAQS ABOUT ADHD

## 1. What is ADHD?

- ADHD stands for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.
- ADHD is characterized as a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity that occurs more often and is more severe than is usually seen in one's peers.
- Only a trained health care provider can accurately diagnose ADHD.
- People with ADHD may have difficulty sustaining attention, may be hyperactive or restless, and may act in an impulsive manner.
- These symptoms of ADHD occur in more than one setting, such as at work, at school, or in social settings.
- ADHD starts in childhood, but can continue through adolescence and into adulthood.
- In the United States, 9.5% of children and 4.4% of adults are affected by ADHD.

## 2. What causes ADHD?

- The exact origin of ADHD is unknown, but researchers believe the disorder may be caused by one or more of the following factors:
- Brain Chemistry -ADHD is thought to be caused by an imbalance of two chemical messengers, or neuro transmitters, in the brain. Researchers think that these chemicals might play an important role in ADHD.
- Genetics - Research suggests that ADHD tends to run in families. However, this does not mean that all children in a family will have the disorder.
- Environment - Certain external factors, such as smoking during pregnancy or complications during pregnancy, delivery, or infancy, may contribute to ADHD.

## 3. What parts of the brain are thought to be involved in ADHD?

We do not know exactly why people develop ADHD. It may be related to problems with a part of the brain called the prefrontal cortex. Different parts of the prefrontal cortex control attention, behavior and judgment. Certain regions of the prefrontal cortex may not properly function in people with ADHD. If the areas of the prefrontal cortex are impaired, a person may have symptoms such as inattention or distraction, impulsive or hyperactive behavior and/or inappropriate behavior.

## 4. What are the symptoms of ADHD?

There are three core symptoms of ADHD:

- Difficulty paying attention
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity

## 5. How is ADHD diagnosed?

There is no simple test for ADHD. However, there is a standardized way that ADHD is diagnosed. To determine if your loved one has ADHD, a health care professional may:

- Ask about symptoms (current and past), including severity, duration and how they affected his/her life, school, or work performance.
- Ask about whether there is a family history of ADHD or other psychiatric conditions.
- Ask about any history of mental health problems (e.g. depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder) to rule out other possible causes for his/her symptoms.
- Ask about illnesses or other problems when he/she was young.
- Perform a physical exam and ask about general health status to rule out other possible medical causes for his/her symptoms.
- Review school records.

To be diagnosed with ADHD, a person must have at least six inattentive and/or hyperactive/impulsive symptoms:

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| • Inattentive Symptoms                       | • Feelings of restlessness (teen/adults)         | • Mental effort                               |
| • Hyperactive/Impulsive Symptoms             | • Unable to follow through on tasks              | • Losing items needed for tasks or activities |
| • Careless mistakes/poor attention to detail | • Trouble with quiet activities                  | • Blurting out answers                        |
| • Fidgeting/squirming                        | • Poor organization                              | • Getting easily distracted                   |
| • Unable to pay continuous attention         | • Needing to be "on the go"                      | • Trouble taking turns                        |
| • Unable to stay seated                      | • Staying away from tasks that require sustained | • Being forgetful in daily activities         |
| • Poor listening skills                      | • Talking too much                               | • Interrupting or intruding on others         |
| • Running/climbing (children)                |  |   |

