



Treating Adult ADHD

The importance of an accurate diagnosis

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a manageable condition that affects approximately 5% of the world's population.¹ While many people consider ADHD to be a childhood disorder, ADHD is a complex lifelong neurobiological condition.^{2,3}



An adult diagnosed with ADHD may not have all of the symptoms, and those symptoms may vary in severity, when compared to other adults with ADHD.⁴

An appropriate diagnosis and comprehensive management plan is vital in order to provide the most effective treatment and support for an adult living with ADHD.^{2,4,5}

Less than one-quarter of adults living with ADHD have been diagnosed.⁶ Behaviours caused by ADHD in childhood, present themselves differently in adults, and can change throughout a person's lifetime.⁴ Some adults may develop coping skills to manage the daily effects of ADHD.²

Treatment options

The most effective treatment recommended for adults with ADHD involves a range of methods, often referred to as a 'multimodal' treatment plan. No single treatment method is sufficient to produce the best possible outcome. The type of approach will be influenced by the symptoms and co-existing conditions.²

A multimodal treatment plan may include education, medication, therapy and coaching.²

Education

Adults with ADHD need to become 'experts' in their condition if they are to develop the strategies necessary to manage their ADHD. Ideally, education about ADHD should also include family, friends and carers.²

Education is key to help adults understand and better manage their condition. Education can extend to learning new strategies to manage ADHD symptoms such as memory, sense of time, organisation skills, social skills, motivation and anger management.²

“With the right treatment plan, the majority of adults with ADHD can successfully manage their condition and lead fulfilling lives.”

Joy Toll OAM, President, ADDults with ADHD (NSW) Inc.

Medication

Research shows that medication, when part of a multimodal treatment approach, can play an important role in successfully treating and managing Adult ADHD.²

There are stimulant and non-stimulant medications used to treat Adult ADHD that work differently.² In Australia, stimulant and non-stimulant medication is prescribed by a psychiatrist.

Some adults with ADHD can manage their symptoms without medication. Others may need medication for a period of time, for example to help with work or study, while others may need to include medication in their treatment plan on a long term basis.²



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Therapy

A therapist, such as a psychologist, may use cognitive behaviour therapy to help manage their ADHD. Individual, couples or family therapy may address issues arising from poor self-esteem, poor social skills, poor anger management, addictive behaviour and other co-existing conditions.^{4,5} Vocational counselling may increase an adult's chances of success and satisfaction in the workplace.⁷

Coaching

Coaching or mentoring is another strategy that can help adults with ADHD work on specific goals, to develop strategies for managing home and work life.⁸



Co-existing conditions

It is common for adults with ADHD to have co-existing conditions such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, autism spectrum disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder or personality disorders. Often adults are treated for the presenting condition and the underlying ADHD may be missed.^{2,4}

In some cases, people with ADHD may self medicate with substances which can lead to addiction.²

A high percentage of adults have anxiety or depression with ADHD. Where major depression is also diagnosed, a psychiatrist may prescribe an anti-depressant in conjunction with their ADHD medication.²

Appropriate assessment, medical treatment, education, therapy, support and management strategies can lead to improved outcomes for adults with ADHD and co-existing conditions.^{2,4,5}



Where to find help and information

A healthcare professional who understands or provides treatment for adults with ADHD, including a GP, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, counsellor or ADHD coach.

ADDults with ADHD
Helpline: (02) 9889 5977
www.adultadhd.org.au

References:

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8. WebMD, 2005-2013 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: ADHD in Adults' date viewed: 2 May 2013 <http://www.webmd.com/add-adhd/guide/adhd-adults?page=2>

This information is not intended as professional advice. Please speak with your healthcare professional if you have any concerns or questions.

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