

# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

*This is general information for your knowledge and understanding of how to support students with learning disabilities. It is important to remember that ADHD affects all people differently. Speak with the student and family to understand how ADHD affects the student and their learning and environmental needs. It is not Tutor Doctor's role to suggest a learning disability is present in a student, diagnose learning disabilities, suggest a course of action with the school, or to suggest treatment for learning disabilities.*

## What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a brain-based disorder that severely impacts a person's day to day functioning. It is conservatively estimated that ADHD affects 5% of children and 4% of adults worldwide. It is unknown exactly what causes ADHD, but it is believed to be a chemical imbalance in the brain that affects behavior. ADHD is often comorbid (occurring at the same time as at least one other medical condition) with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Dyspraxia, attachment disorders, and/or other neuro-developmental conditions.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is the official medical term, whether or not the person demonstrates symptoms of hyperactivity and the term **Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)** is now considered outdated.

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Types:

An ADHD diagnosis is further broken down into three qualifying types.

**Primarily Inattentive:** The form of ADHD most often labeled as ADD, where the person may be shy or seem as if they are in their own world. Primarily Inattentive ADHD is most common in girls and women and hyperactivity is not a symptom. Symptoms may include:

- Disorganization
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty listening
- Distractibility
- Lack of focus or attention
- Lack of attention to detail
- Reluctance to participate in activities that require sustained mental effort
- Difficulty following through on instructions

**Primarily Hyperactive-Impulsive:** The stereotypical view of ADHD, yet the child running around in chaotic fury, not listening to adults, and jumping into conversations, only describes a very small percentage of people with Primarily Hyperactive-Impulsive ADHD. Primarily Hyperactive-Impulsive ADHD is most common in boys and men. Symptoms may include:

- Uncontrollable fidgeting
- Difficulty playing or partaking in leisure activities quietly
- Excessive talking
- Difficulty with impulse control-such as talking out of turn or blurting out answers
- Difficulty waiting for their turn

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- Tendency to get out of their seat when sitting is expected (older children and adults may have feelings of extreme restlessness)
- Seems to be “always on the go”
- Inappropriate behavior-such as climbing on things or running in inappropriate locations

*As Primarily Hyperactive-Impulsive ADHD symptoms are more obvious to an observer and as this diagnosis is most commonly given to males, males are overall more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD. The disorder often goes undiagnosed in females who most commonly demonstrate symptoms of Primarily Inattentive ADHD.*

**Combined:** A Combined ADHD diagnosis is given when six symptoms of Primarily Inattentive ADHD and six symptoms of Primarily Hyperactive-Impulsive ADHD are present. The symptoms used to diagnose all forms of ADHD are outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-V).

## Strategies for Supporting Students Who Have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder:

- Reduce visual stimuli in tutoring materials- too much visual detail can cause confusion
- Ensure you have the student’s attention before giving instructions and maintain eye contact.
- Avoid giving multiple instructions at once- break them down into chunks.
- Plan out tutoring sessions, breaking them into steps, and share the plan with the student so they know what to expect.
- Provide immediate positive feedback and praise for good effort and appropriate behavior.
- Provide immediate positive feedback and praise for completing a task or step.
- Give immediate rewards for good effort and appropriate behavior- stickers are a great reinforcer for young students.
- Help them with their organization.
- Be consistent- set and keep routines.
- Set clear rules, expectations, and boundaries and be firm when setting them.
- Be a positive role model.
- Give choices, but limit choices to no more than two options.
- Take brain breaks and do something physical to help manage hyperactivity.
- Be flexible.
- Be understanding.
- Get creative and come up with new ways to engage your student.
- Use strategies from all learning styles (see the Learning Styles Guide for ideas).