



# Lifestyle Visions

Presents

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)  
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Description and Treatment Protocol

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### Description

#### FACT SHEET ON ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD/ADD)

##### Important Disclaimer- Please Read This:

The following information is not intended to provide any type of professional advice nor diagnostic service. If you have any concerns about ADHD or other health issues, please consult a qualified health care professional in your community.

##### IS IT ADD OR ADHD? WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The difference is mainly one of terminology, which can be confusing at times. The "official" clinical diagnosis is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD. In turn, ADHD is broken down into three different subtypes: Combined Type, Predominantly Inattentive Type, and Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type.

Many people use the term ADD as a generic term for all types of ADHD. The term ADD has gained popularity among the general public, in the media, and is even commonly used among professionals. Whether we call it ADD or ADHD, however, we are all basically referring to the same thing.

##### WHO HAS ADHD?

According to epidemiological data, approximately 4% to 6% of the U.S. population has ADHD.

ADHD usually persists throughout a person's lifetime. It is **NOT** limited to children. Approximately one-half to two-thirds of children with ADHD will continue to have significant problems with ADHD symptoms and behaviors as adults, which impacts their lives on the job, within the family, and in social relationships.

##### DEFINITION OF ADHD:

ADHD is a diagnosis applied to children and adults who consistently display certain characteristic behaviors over a period of time. The most common core features include:

- Distractibility (poor sustained attention to tasks)
- Impulsivity (impaired impulse control and delay of gratification)
- Hyperactivity (excessive activity and physical restlessness)

In order to meet diagnostic criteria, these behaviors must be excessive, long-term, and pervasive. The behaviors must appear before age 7, and continue for at least 6 months. A crucial consideration is that the behaviors must create a real handicap in at least two areas of a person's life, such as school, home, work, or social settings. These criteria set ADHD apart from the "normal" distractibility and impulsive behavior of childhood, or the effects of the hectic and overstressed lifestyle prevalent in our society.

According to the DSM-IV (the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition)



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some common symptoms of ADHD include: often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes; often has difficulty sustaining attention to tasks; often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly; often fails to follow instructions carefully and completely; losing or forgetting important things; feeling restless, often fidgeting with hands or feet, or squirming; running or climbing excessively; often talks excessively; often blurts out answers before hearing the whole question; often has difficulty awaiting turn.

Please keep in mind that the exact nature and severity of ADHD symptoms varies from person to person. Approximately one-third of people with ADHD do not have the hyperactive or overactive behavior component, for example.

### WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS ABOUT ADHD:

ADHD is **NOT** caused by poor parenting, family problems, poor teachers or schools, too much TV, food allergies, or excess sugar. One early theory was that attention disorders were caused by minor head injuries or damage to the brain, and thus for many years ADHD was called "minimal brain damage" or "minimal brain dysfunction." The vast majority of people with ADHD have no history of head injury or evidence of brain damage, however. Another theory, which is still heard in the media, is that refined sugar and food additives make children hyperactive and inattentive. Scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) concluded that this may apply to only about 5 percent of children with ADHD, mostly either very young children or children with food allergies.

ADHD **IS** very likely caused by biological factors which influence neurotransmitter activity in certain parts of the brain, and which have a strong genetic basis. Studies at NIMH using a PET (positron emission tomography) scanner to observe the brain at work have shown a link between a person's ability to pay continued attention and the level of activity in the brain. Specifically researchers measured the level of glucose used by the areas of the brain that inhibit impulses and control attention. In people with ADHD, the brain areas that control attention used less glucose, indicating that they were less active. It appears from this research that a lower level of activity in some parts of the brain may cause inattention and other ADHD symptoms.

There is a great deal of evidence that ADHD runs in families, which is suggestive of genetic factors. If one person in a family is diagnosed with ADHD, there is a 25% to 35% probability that any other family member also has ADHD, compared to a 4% to 6% probability for someone in the general population.

### TREATMENT OF ADHD:

Clinical experience has shown that the most effective treatment for ADHD is a combination of medication (when necessary), therapy or counseling to learn coping skills and adaptive behaviors, and ADD coaching for adults.

Medication is often used to help normalize brain activity, as prescribed by a physician. Stimulant medications (Ritalin, Dexedrine, and Adderall) are commonly used because they have been shown to be most effective for most people with ADHD. However, many other medications may also be used at the discretion of the physician.



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Behavior therapy and cognitive therapy are often helpful to modify certain behaviors and to deal with the emotional effects of ADHD. Many adults also benefit from working with an ADHD coach to help manage problem behaviors and develop coping skills, such as improving organizational skills and improving productivity.

ADHD is recognized as a disability under federal legislation (the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Americans With Disabilities Act; and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act). Appropriate and reasonable accommodations are sometimes made at school for children with ADHD, and in the workplace for adults with ADHD, which help the individual to work more efficiently and productively.

### Adult Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) Checklist

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Use the following general adult ADHD checklist to help further define ADHD symptoms. No ADHD adult has all of the symptoms, but if you notice a strong presence of more than 20 of these symptoms, there is a strong likelihood of ADHD. Read this list of behaviors and rate yourself (or the person who has asked you to rate him or her) on each behavior listed. Use the following scale and place the appropriate number next to the item.

- 0 = never
- 1 = rarely
- 2 = occasionally
- 3 = frequently
- 4 = very frequently

**\*\*IMPORTANT:** This is not a tool for self-diagnosis. Its purpose is simply to help you determine whether ADHD may be a factor in the behavior of the person you are assessing using this checklist. An actual diagnosis can be made only by an experienced professional.

#### **Past History**

1. \_\_\*History of ADHD symptoms in childhood, such as distractibility, short attention span, impulsivity or restlessness; ADHD doesn't start at age 30.
2. \_\_History of not living up to potential in school or work (report cards with comments such as "not living up to potential")
3. \_\_History of frequent behavior problems in school (mostly for males)
4. \_\_History of bedwetting past age 5
5. \_\_Family history of ADHD , learning problems, mood disorders or substance abuse problems

#### **Short Attention Span/Distractibility**

6. \_\_\*Short attention span, unless very interested in something
7. \_\_\*Easily distracted, tendency to drift away (although at times can be hyperfocused)
8. \_\_ Lacks attention to detail, due to distractibility
9. \_\_ Trouble listening carefully to directions
10. \_\_Frequently misplaces things
11. \_\_Skips around while reading, or goes to the end first, trouble staying on track
12. \_\_Difficulty learning new games, because it is hard to stay on track during directions
13. \_\_Easily distracted during sex, causing frequent breaks or turn-offs during lovemaking
14. \_\_Poor listening skills
15. \_\_Tendency to be easily bored (tunes out)



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### **Restlessness**

- 16. \_\_ Restlessness, constant motion, legs moving, fidgeting
- 17. \_\_ Has to be moving in order to think
- 18. \_\_ Trouble sitting still, such as trouble sitting in one place for too long, sitting at a desk job for long periods, sitting through a movie
- 19. \_\_ An internal sense of anxiety or nervousness

### **Impulsivity**

- 20. \_\_ Impulsive, in words and/or actions (spending)
- 21. \_\_ Say just what comes to mind without considering its impact (tactless)
- 22. \_\_ Trouble going through established channels, trouble following proper procedure, an attitude of "read the directions when all else fails"
- 23. \_\_ Impatient, low frustration tolerance
- 24. \_\_ A prisoner of the moment
- 25. \_\_ Frequent traffic violations
- 26. \_\_ Frequent, impulsive job changes
- 27. \_\_ Tendency to embarrass others
- 28. \_\_ Lying or stealing on impulse

### **Poor Organization**

- 29. \_\_ Poor organization and planning, trouble maintaining an organized work/living area
- 30. \_\_ Chronically late or chronically in a hurry
- 31. \_\_ Often have piles of stuff
- 32. \_\_ Easily overwhelmed by tasks of daily living
- 33. \_\_ Poor financial management (late bills, check book a mess, spending unnecessary money on late fees)

### **Problems Getting Started and Following Through**

- 34. \_\_ Chronic procrastination or trouble getting started
- 35. \_\_ Starting projects but not finishing them, poor follow through
- 36. \_\_ Enthusiastic beginnings but poor endings
- 37. \_\_ Spends excessive time at work because of inefficiencies
- 38. \_\_ Inconsistent work performance

### **Negative Internal Feelings**

- 39. \_\_ Chronic sense of under achievement, feeling you should be much further along in your life than you are
- 40. \_\_ Chronic problems with self-esteem
- 41. \_\_ Sense of impending doom
- 42. \_\_ Mood swings
- 43. \_\_ Negativity
- 44. \_\_ Frequent feeling of demoralization or that things won't work out for you

### **Relational Difficulties**

- 45. \_\_ Trouble sustaining friendships or intimate relationships, promiscuity
- 46. \_\_ Trouble with intimacy
- 47. \_\_ Tendency to be immature



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- 48. \_\_ Self-centered; immature interests
- 49. \_\_ Failure to see others' needs or activities as important
- 50. \_\_ Lack of talking in a relationship
- 51. \_\_ Verbally abusive to others
- 52. \_\_ Prone to hysterical outburst
- 53. \_\_ Avoids group activities
- 54. \_\_ Trouble with authority

### **Short Fuse**

- 55. \_\_ Quick responses to slights that are real or imagined
- 56. \_\_ Rage outbursts, short fuse

### **Frequent Search For High Stimulation**

- 57. \_\_ Frequent search for high stimulation (bungee jumping, gambling, race track, high stress jobs, ER doctors, doing many things at once, etc.)
- 58. \_\_ Tendency to seek conflict, be argumentative or to start disagreements for the fun of it

### **Tendency To Get Stuck (thoughts or behaviors)**

- 59. \_\_ Tendency to worry needlessly and endlessly
- 60. \_\_ Tendency toward ADHD ictions (food, alcohol, drugs, work)

### **Switches Things Around**

- 61. \_\_ Switches around numbers, letters or words
- 62. \_\_ Turn words around in conversations

### **Writing/Fine Motor Coordination Difficulties**

- 63. \_\_ Poor writing skills (hard to get information from brain to pen)
- 64. \_\_ Poor handwriting, often prints
- 65. \_\_ Coordination difficulties

### **The Harder I Try The Worse It Gets**

- 66. \_\_ Performance becomes worse under pressure.
- 67. \_\_ Test anxiety, or during tests your mind tends to go blank
- 68. \_\_ The harder you try, the worse it gets
- 69. \_\_ Work or schoolwork deteriorates under pressure
- 70. \_\_ Tendency to turn off or become stuck when asked questions in social situations
- 71. \_\_ Falls asleep or becomes tired while reading

### **Sleep/Wake Difficulties**

- 72. \_\_ Difficulty falling asleep, may be due to too many thoughts at night
- 73. \_\_ Difficulty coming awake (may need coffee or other stimulant or activity before feeling fully awake)

### **Low Energy**

- 74. \_\_ Periods of low energy, especially early in the morning and in the afternoon



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75. \_\_ Frequently feeling tired

### **Sensitive To Noise Or Touch**

76. \_\_ Startles easily

77. \_\_ Sensitive to touch, clothes, noise and light

When you have completed the above checklist, calculate the Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of Items with a score of three (3) or more: \_\_\_\_\_

Score for Item #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Score for Item #6: \_\_\_\_\_

Score for Item #7: \_\_\_\_\_

More than 20 items with a score of three or more indicates a strong tendency toward ADHD . Note: The three items with \* and a score above three are essential to make the diagnosis. One of the most common ways to diagnose ADHD in adults is when parents reluctantly say that they have tried their child's medication and that they found it very helpful. They report it helped them concentrate for longer periods of time. They became more organized and were less impulsive. Trying your child's medication is not something I recommend!"

## **ADHD "To Do" List**

### **1.Determine if you might have ADHD**

—Fill-in the checklist listed above.

—Reflect on life and determine if ADHD symptoms have been there since early childhood

### **2. Find a Qualified Person to Make a Formal ADHD Diagnosis**

—Read the articles "[ADHD 101](#)" and "[Tips for Finding an ADHD Clinician](#)" at our web site [www.addresources.org](http://www.addresources.org). "ADHD 101" is also in our *Adult ADHD Reader*.

Talk with others who have been diagnosed. On-line there are ADHD support groups at [www.supportpath.com](http://www.supportpath.com), [www.groups.yahoo.com](http://www.groups.yahoo.com) and [groups.msn.com](http://groups.msn.com)

—Clarify your insurance coverage and your finances. Realize that spending money for an ADHD diagnosis and treatment will be the best money you have ever spent.

—Determine if you will see a psychiatrist, a family practice doctor, a psychologist or other clinician.

Psychiatrists generally have more familiarity with adult ADHD than family doctors, although both are M.D.'s and could, if knowledgeable, diagnose ADHD and prescribe medications. Some physician assistants and nurse practitioners can also diagnose ADHD and prescribe medications.

Psychologists and other therapists may be qualified to diagnose ADHD, but are not able to prescribe medications. This can cause difficulties as you can get the diagnosis, but where will you get the primary treatment—stimulant medication?

—Locate an ADHD physician or therapist who works with adults. Search our [National ADHD Directory](#) online.

—Ask what time and expense will be involved in getting a diagnosis.

—Learn what information you should bring with you to your appointment.

—If satisfied, make an appointment.

—If you've been diagnosed with ADHD earlier in your life, try to obtain records as this can save time and money in the diagnosis process.

### **3. Know What is Necessary to Make an ADHD Diagnosis**



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—Knowledgeable ADHD clinician listens to your history

### **4. Know What May Be Included in Making An ADHD Diagnosis, Depending on Clinician**

- Complete some questionnaires and/or rating scales
- Take a TOVA test
- Complete a battery of psychological tests
- Bring in early school reports, etc. for clinician review

### **5. Obtain Medical Treatment—This is key!**

—The primary, and most proven effective, treatment for ADHD is stimulant medication—ADDerall, Concerta, Dexedrine, and Ritalin. There is a new non-stimulant medication, Strattera, that is also proving helpful to many. One of these medicines, at the right dose, will help most people with ADHD.

—Clinicians should have you try more than one medicine, at varying doses, to determine which is most helpful to you. Trials of each medicine need be only a week or less, as all the stimulants are very fast acting.(i. e. within hours of taking a pill you will feel its impact.) The impact is short-lived—ranging from 2 to 8 hours depending on the individual person and the medication taken

—Note a few troublesome behaviors you have that are ADHD-driven and chart the frequency of these behaviors as you try the medications at varying doses. This will help determine which medicine, if any, is most helpful.

—Medication for ADHD should make it possible for you to have a moment's reflection before acting—you will be less impulsive—and should allow you to direct your focus where you wish.

—If your clinician is unwilling to prescribe the stimulants for you, ask why not? It may be because he is uncomfortable prescribing a controlled substance, which is not an appropriate answer for meeting your needs.

—If you have a history of drug addiction, the clinician may prescribe Strattera, Wellbutrin or Effexor, which have been found helpful for ADHD, although not generally as helpful as the stimulants. You may need to locate a clinician comfortable prescribing stimulants to someone with an addiction history that is not currently abusing substances.

—Read *The Link between ADD and ADDictions: Getting the Help You Deserve* by Wendy Richardson.

### **6. Explore Additional Treatments for ADHD**

—Being properly medicated, or having your brain chemistry improved by other methods, is the cornerstone of ADHD treatment.

—A small number of people is not helped by medications or react poorly to taking medication.

—There are alternative treatments for ADHD which, by testimony only, people have reported as helpful. These alternative treatments are generally more helpful with the milder versions of AD/HD. Among the alternative treatments are: blue-green algae, ginkgo bilboa, pycnogenal, special nutritional supplements, essential fatty acids, amino acids and neurofeedback. Consult a knowledgeable naturopath or other therapist as appropriate.

—Other helpful treatments include those prescribed for general good health, but become even more critical for people with ADHD to incorporate into their life.

- Regular exercise
- Adequate, regular sleep
- Good nutrition and regular meals
- Relaxation and stress reduction techniques;
- Balanced lifestyle between work and play
- Sex in moderation

### **7. Coping Strategies**



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- Learn about ADHD—what it is and what it isn't—Resources include books, ADHD magazines, reputable internet sites, conferences and support groups. Information on all these resources can be found at: [www.addresources.org](http://www.addresources.org); [www.add.about.com](http://www.add.about.com) and [www.add.org](http://www.add.org).
- Have those involved with you learn about ADHD.
- Realize that nothing has changed by getting an ADHD diagnosis. You only have been given a name for what has always existed.
- Expect to be both relieved and sad after receiving your diagnosis. Relieved to know that something is the matter; yet sad to learn something is the matter and that it wasn't learned about earlier.
- Recognize that you will get better. Getting your ADHD diagnosis is a positive, helpful step in building a better life for yourself.
- Forgive yourself for your past failings.
- Focus on learning and taking the steps to make your future better.
- Accept that improvements will come slowly, so go easy on yourself. Rome wasn't built in a day.
- Realize that acquiring new habits and behaviors takes time.
- Celebrate each desired new habit or behavior you acquire.
- Meet and share ideas and concerns with others who have been diagnosed with ADHD. There are many ADHD chat rooms and email lists on the web.
- Attend or start an ADHD support group such as ADHD RESOURCES.
- Make one or two friends with ADHD that you can talk with about your experiences.
- Become comfortable with telling people, in a simple, non-aggressive, way that you have ADHD.
- Find ways to describe, in simple terms, how ADHD negatively and positively impacts your life.
- Learn to laugh at your ADHD-moments
- If unable to accomplish these "To Do" items, seek the assistance of an ADHD therapist or coach.