

MYTHS ABOUT ADHD

What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) begins in childhood. Kids with ADHD may have a hard time following instructions, remaining seated, and staying organized. Kids with the disorder may also tend to forget or lose things, interrupt others, and fidget a lot. Not every kid with ADHD does all these things. Also, ADHD may look different in adolescents and adults.

Everyone may have a hard time staying focused or following instructions once in a while. But the symptoms mentioned above are more common or severe in kids with ADHD than in other kids.

How common is ADHD?

In the United States, about 5.4 million children currently have ADHD. This is about 8.5% of kids in the US, or 1 out of every 12 children aged 2 to 17.¹ About 4.4% of adults in the US currently have ADHD.² This includes people who were diagnosed as kids and those who were diagnosed later in life.



Common Myths about ADHD

Myth 1: All ADHD Looks the Same



Some kids with ADHD are **hyperactive** or **impulsive**. These kids may fidget a lot, get out of their seat often, and interrupt others.

Other kids with ADHD are **inattentive**. These children are often forgetful, disorganized, or distracted. They may find it hard to finish tasks, follow instructions, and pay attention to details.

Some kids with ADHD may have hyperactive or impulsive symptoms but not inattentive symptoms. Some kids with ADHD may have inattentive symptoms but not hyperactive or impulsive symptoms. Other kids with ADHD may show both.

Myth 2: Only boys have ADHD



In the United States, almost twice as many boys are diagnosed with ADHD than are girls.¹ **BUT** there are many girls who do have ADHD, which sometimes looks different than ADHD in boys. For instance, **girls with ADHD often have inattentive ADHD without hyperactive/impulsive symptoms.**³

Myth 3: Kids will outgrow their ADHD



About 50% of kids with ADHD still to have symptoms as adults.⁴ In general, hyperactive and impulsive symptoms become less common in adolescence and adulthood. Symptoms of inattention often continue over time.⁴ This is not going to be true for every person with ADHD. Whether specific ADHD symptoms continue will be different for each person.

Some adults and teens may learn strategies to manage their symptoms. Also, adults with ADHD may have different symptoms than kids do. For example, a child with ADHD may get out of their seat to walk around. In this situation, an adult with ADHD may just feel very restless.

Myth 4: Bad parenting causes ADHD



Scientists are still studying the causes of ADHD, but there is no single factor that leads to the disorder. Genetics and some aspects of the early childhood environment may play a role in some cases.

It is important to note that **there is no evidence that bad parenting causes ADHD.**⁵ But, there are interventions for parents of kids with ADHD that can be a helpful form of treatment. Parenting interventions may reduce ADHD symptoms and/or improve social skills in kids with ADHD.⁶⁻⁸

Myth 5: Medication is the only way to treat ADHD



Parents of kids with ADHD have many options. Some families find that medication is helpful to lower ADHD symptoms. This is not the only form of treatment for ADHD.

Behavioral treatment (therapy) for ADHD exists. Some of these therapies focus on children's behavior, social skills, or organization. Others focus on teaching parents strategies for interacting with their kids. Some families decide to use both behavioral treatment and medication. Other families choose to use only one of these.

It can often be difficult to decide on the type of treatment for your child. You might need to think about a lot of different factors. These might include a child's age, symptoms of ADHD and other conditions, impairment, and previous treatment. Your child's therapist and/or doctor may be helpful when making decisions about treatment.

Myth 6: Kids with ADHD can't be successful



Many kids with ADHD find school to be difficult. They may have trouble with classroom learning and making friends. Symptoms may make some parts of school harder for kids with ADHD, even when they do well in other areas. These kids may need to work harder or for more time than their peers to finish assignments.

An ADHD diagnosis does not mean that a child is not going to do well in school or in life. There are many people with ADHD who go on to graduate from college and have good jobs as adults. The same is true for people without ADHD.

Support from teachers, family, and friends, and treatment for ADHD may help kids with ADHD to do better in school and in other areas of life.⁹

References

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