



# Ten frequently asked questions about ADHD

By Colin Foley, Director of Training



## 1. What is ADHD?

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that makes it difficult for children to concentrate, to sustain attention, to sit still, to follow directions and to control impulsive behaviour. These symptoms make it difficult for children and young people to follow through on tasks in age-appropriate ways which can make classroom-based learning challenging at times.

## 2. What are the most common symptoms of ADHD?

The symptoms of ADHD can be divided into two groups: inattentive behaviours and hyperactive and impulsive behaviours. Inattentive symptoms can include being very distractible, having difficulty remembering and poor organisation. Hyperactive and impulsive symptoms can include impatience, excessive movement, talking and interrupting as well as difficulties turn taking.

## 3. My child is not very hyperactive, can she have ADHD?

Yes. Children and young people who are inattentive but not particularly restless or impulsive can have what is called “Inattentive type ADHD.” They tend to be diagnosed later because they are missed due to the absence of hyperactivity. However, Inattentive type ADHD can still result in many challenges for the child or young person, particularly in learning environments.

## 4. What is Hyperfocus?

The condition is not really an Attention Deficit. People with ADHD can pay attention. It is actually a condition which leads to difficulties controlling, directing and sustaining attention. People with ADHD can pay a lot of attention to things and activities that really interest or excite them or activities which are immediately rewarding. This is called Hyperfocus.

## 5. What is Executive Functioning?

Executive functioning is the way in which your brain plans and organises itself. The functions are self-regulating skills that we all use to accomplish tasks, for example, target setting, prioritising, self-monitoring and time management. homework. It is very common that children and young people with ADHD will have difficulties in these areas.

## 6. How will ADHD affect my child outside of school?

ADHD can have an impact upon every area of the life of a child or young person, for example, in making and sustaining friendships. Children and young people can be susceptible to bullying and can experience rejection by their peers. This can lead to children and young people experiencing high levels of anxiety in a range of places and situations, not just inside the classroom.

## 7. Is ADHD a brain-based condition?

Yes. Brain imaging studies have shown that people with ADHD have structurally different brains than people without ADHD. It also runs in families. Children whose parents have ADHD up to a 60% chance of also having ADHD.



## 8. What treatments are there for ADHD?

There are a variety of research-backed therapies that can help relieve symptoms of ADHD. Some of the most effective approaches combine several therapies, such as medication. Stimulant medications (Ritalin or Concerta) are the most commonly prescribed. These drugs stimulate the parts of the brain that are under stimulated. These parts of the brain are related to thinking and attention. The goals of these medications are to reduce hyperactivity/impulsivity and increase focus/attention. Another example is Cognitive behavioural therapy. This approach emphasises mindfulness and teaches a child to be aware of their emotions as a way of improving attention.

## 9. Can ADHD affect my child's sleep?

Yes, children and young people can experience difficulties with sleep. This can result in not falling asleep easily, not sleep soundly through the night and then not waking up feeling refreshed. The mental and physical restlessness of ADHD can disturb a child's sleep patterns. This can then exacerbate problems with concentration and focus throughout your child's day in school.

## 10. What is time blindness?

Time blindness is a term that was first used by doctors treating people with ADHD. Most young people develop an innate awareness of time and an ability to track its passing. However, for some children and young people with ADHD, this "time awareness" does not develop so successfully leading to missed appointments or playing a game for hours and not realising that there was homework to do done. In the most severe cases, this can have a profound effect on a person's life.