

Understanding Adult ADHD and How Psychiatric Care Can Help



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurological disorder affecting children and adults. It is characterized by difficulty focusing, chronic procrastination, disorganization, being easily distracted, and impulsiveness. Although it is a common disorder, there is still a great deal of misunderstanding and stigma associated with it. Thankfully, available treatments can help individuals manage their symptoms and live life more fully. This article will explore the symptoms of ADHD, diagnosis, treatments, benefits, medications, and psychiatric care for adults with ADHD.



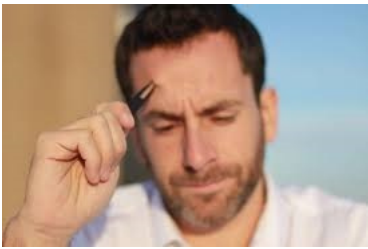
Before proceeding, I would like to share a personal note. I have found treating adult ADHD to be particularly rewarding. There are several reasons for this which I will be happy to discuss with you if we ever have the pleasure of meeting. Too often, patients come to me with a past, and present, diagnosis of ADHD who have encountered resistance from other psychiatrists to treat their disorder. And I understand potential reasons for this because the most effective medications are highly controlled, require extra work and time to prescribe, require higher levels of patient supervision, and have the potential for abuse. But I find these hurdles well worth overcoming because of the enormous improvement that is so often experienced in my patients' lives.





What is ADHD?

ADHD (often referred to as ADD) is a common neurodevelopmental disorder that typically begins in childhood and usually persists into adulthood. It is estimated that about 9% of adults in the United States suffer from ADHD. It is important to note that ADHD is a spectrum disorder, meaning the symptoms range from mild to severe. And when severe, it can be debilitating, causing problems in both work and social environments.



Symptoms of ADHD

The symptoms of ADHD can vary depending on the individual and the severity of the disorder. The most common symptoms of ADHD include difficulty focusing and sustaining attention, procrastination, difficulty following instructions, poor organizational skills, difficulty completing tasks, poor time management (often running late), disorganization, impulsivity, and, in some cases, restlessness or even hyperactivity. In adults, the symptoms may also include low self-esteem, insecurity, and difficulty maintaining relationships. In more extreme cases, symptoms may manifest as difficulty controlling emotions and behavior.

An area of common confusion is the concept that hyperactivity must be present to diagnose ADHD, which, after all, stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. But there are various ADHD subtypes, often not including symptoms of hyperactivity.



Diagnosing ADHD

ADHD can be difficult to diagnose, as the symptoms can be easily confused with other psychological disorders. It is essential to seek professional help if you are experiencing symptoms of ADHD. My extensive experience diagnosing ADHD makes the process relatively easy. But, when situations arise in which more sophisticated testing and analysis is indicated I use the services of a neuropsychologist, Dr. Cibelli, with whom I have conferred for over 20 years. She provides a comprehensive assessment of psychological symptoms and performs a computer-administered TOVA Test for diagnosing ADHD.



Treatments for ADHD

Various treatments are available for ADHD, including medications, lifestyle changes, and psychotherapy. Medication is usually the first line of treatment, as it is generally beneficial. However, medication alone is not always enough to manage the symptoms of ADHD. It may be essential to make lifestyle changes and seek psychotherapy to manage the symptoms of ADHD effectively. Lifestyle changes include getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and managing stress. Psychotherapy can help individuals develop coping strategies and learn to manage their symptoms more effectively.



Benefits of ADHD Treatment

Treatment for ADHD can be beneficial for individuals in many ways. One of the most obvious benefits is improved focus and concentration, which can help individuals achieve their goals. Treatment can also improve the quality of relationships due to greater patience and better management of emotions. Additionally, treatment can enhance self-esteem and self-confidence. In addition, there are many associated higher risks that are decreased with

treatment including car accidents, divorce, job turnover, incarceration, academic failure, and substance abuse. The benefits are often profound and affect every aspect of patients' lives.



Medication for ADHD Symptoms

The most common form of treatment for ADHD is medication such as Adderall and Ritalin. These medications work by increasing the amount of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain, which can improve all ADHD symptoms. But positive responses are not universal and some people do not tolerate the medication due to side effects.

Methylphenidate (Ritalin, Focalin, Metadate, Concerta)

Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine, Dextrostat)

Amphetamine salt mixtures (Adderall)

Lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse)

Viloxazine (Qelbree)- a non-stimulant

Non-stimulant medications, such as Qelbree, can be prescribed for children and adults with ADHD. This medication modulates serotonin and norepinephrine in the brain, which can help improve focus and concentration.

It is important to note that medications alone are not always sufficient to manage the symptoms of ADHD. It can be crucial to make lifestyle changes, such as getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and exercising regularly, to manage the symptoms of ADHD.

Psychiatric Care for Adults with ADHD

Psychiatric care can be beneficial for adults with ADHD by establishing a proper diagnosis and, when appropriate, prescribing medication. It is important to note that psychiatric care is not a "cure" for ADHD, although medication treatment can bestow life-changing benefits. A referral for psychotherapy may be provided to help build better relationships, improve self-esteem, and develop personalized strategies to manage symptoms.

Overcoming the Stigma of ADHD

There is still a lot of misunderstanding and stigma associated with ADHD. It is important to educate yourself about the disorder and understand that it is not a sign of weakness or a character flaw. It is important to be honest about your condition and seek professional help if you are experiencing symptoms of ADHD.



Strategies to Improve Focus and Concentration

There are various strategies that can help individuals with ADHD improve focus and concentration. It is important to establish a regular routine and stick to it. This can help individuals stay on track and be more productive. Additionally, it is important to take regular breaks throughout the day and engage in activities that help relax the mind, such as yoga or mindfulness. It is also important to set realistic goals and break tasks into smaller, achievable steps. Finally, it is important to use tools, such as to-do lists and reminders, to help you stay organized and focused.

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Conclusion

ADHD is a common disorder that affects both children and adults. It is characterized by difficulty concentrating, being easily distracted, lack of patience, procrastination, disorganization, poor time management, impulsivity, and in some cases, hyperactivity. Fortunately, there are treatments available that can help individuals manage their symptoms and live life to the fullest.

In this article, we briefly explored some of the symptoms of ADHD, treatments that are available including medications, potential benefits, and the role of psychiatric care. If you have experienced a life-long history of ADHD symptoms, it is important to seek professional help. The quality of your life could improve in ways you haven't even imagined. You now have the information you need to determine if an evaluation is likely to be beneficial. If so, your next step is to call Gina, the Office Manager at Desert View Health, at 760-895-4332 and set up an intake appointment with me. If she does not answer, leave her a message and she will call you back. Alternatively, you can go to the Self Scheduler, here on the website, to set up the appointment yourself.

I should mention that as of May 11, 2023, the DEA is putting in place new rules for prescribing controlled medications, like those primarily used to treat ADHD. This new law will require that

initial appointments are in person after which all appointments can be online. An exception is allowed if a written referral is received from a prescribing professional, whom you have seen in person. (Please coordinate with Gina if a referral is needed.) I look forward to meeting with you to discuss your symptoms and life challenges, culminating in what should be a very promising treatment plan.



Tom Jackson, MD

