



So You Think You Have ADHD.

Now What?

(Just Kidding, I've Got You Covered!)

- I. Patient Materials to Aid Diagnosis
- II. Information to Help Your Doctor Diagnose ADHD



Patient Section

(That's You!)

Resource Table of Contents

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2. The Adult ADHD Questionnaire
3. Tips for How to Find a Knowledgeable Doctor
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In the next section, you will find resources to provide to your doctor.



1. Instructions

In this resource you will find a questionnaire that evaluates your experience with the symptoms of ADHD. I recommend that you answer this questionnaire on your own, then have someone who is really close to you also fill it out. This can help make sure you haven't missed or forgotten anything and can also help your doctor identify how you are functioning with your symptoms.

When you have the conversation with your therapist or doctor, make sure you bring this questionnaire with you along with the Doctor portion of the resource. If you have trouble finding a doctor who is knowledgeable about ADHD, make sure you check out the "How to Find a knowledgeable ADHD Doctor" portion of this resource.

That's it. Carry on...



2. The Questionnaire

Instructions: This Questionnaire is based on the diagnostic criteria in the DSM 5 for ADHD and it's 3 presentations. The first 9 items evaluate symptoms of inattention and the last 9 items assess for symptoms of hyperactivity. In each category, if one prompt generates a 3 and the rest generate a 2, the score for that category should be assessed as a 3. Place each score in the blank to side and the highest score for the category in the blank beside the category name.

Rate each symptom on average, not just in the context of bad days. Most people experience these symptoms when anxious, stressed, sleepless, depressed, or otherwise facing difficult circumstances. ADHD impacts a person in these ways even on a great day.

0= Never 1=Rarely 2=Somewhat Often 3=Very Often



1. Carelessness _____

I make a lot of mistakes _____

I make them because I am careless/not paying attention _____

I rush through work or other activities (especially the ones I find boring or don't want to do) _____

I have difficulty with detailed work _____

I don't check my work _____

My partner or coworkers complain that I'm careless _____

I'm messy at home, in my car, at work or any combination of these _____

My workspace is so messy that I have trouble finding things _____

3. Difficulty Listening _____

My spouse, boss, colleagues, friends... complain that I don't listen or respond (or daydream) when they are talking to me or asking me to do something _____

People often have to repeat directions to me _____

I find that I miss the key parts of conversations because of drifting off in my thoughts _____

Not listening often causes problems for me in my personal or professional life _____

If others don't notice that I'm not paying attention, I find myself having to find a way to respond without letting them know I wasn't listening _____

2. Attention Difficulty _____

I have trouble paying attention when watching movies, reading, or attending lectures _____

Or on fun activities such as sports or board games _____

It's hard for me to keep my mind on school or work _____

I have unusual trouble staying focused on boring or repetitive tasks _____

It takes me a lot longer than it should to complete tasks because I can't seem to focus for long _____

It seems like it's harder for me than it is for others I know _____

I have trouble remembering what I read and I need to re-read the same thing several times _____

4. Don't Follow Through _____

I have trouble finishing things (such as work or chores) _____

I often leave things half done and start another project _____

Or the beginning of my project is better organized or more detailed and the last part seems haphazard/disorganized and thrown together _____

I need consequences (such as deadlines) to finish work or projects _____

I have trouble following instructions especially if they are complex, have many steps, or need to be done in a specific order _____



5. Trouble Organizing Things _____

I have trouble organizing tasks into ordered steps and it often feels overwhelming _____

It's hard prioritizing work and chores which makes it hard to get them accomplished in a timely manner _____

I need others to plan for me _____

I have trouble with time management and it causes problems for me _____

My difficulty with planning leads to procrastination and putting off tasks until the last moment possible _____

I seem to bounce from task to task because they all seem important to me but doing so means I don't get much accomplished on any of them _____

7. Losing Things _____

I seem to always lose things (eg, important work papers, keys, wallet, coats, etc) and it seems to happen to me more than it does to others _____

It seems like I'm constantly looking for important items that I've lost _____

I get into trouble for this (at work or at home) _____

I need to put items (eg, glasses, wallet, keys) in the same place each time or I lose them _____

9. Forgetful _____

I need to write down instructions or tasks I must do, otherwise I will forget them _____

Even if I write it down, I forget to look at my to do list and forget it anyway _____

6. Difficulty with tasks that need a lot of concentration _____

I avoid tasks (work, chores, reading, board games) that are challenging or lengthy because it's hard to stay focused on these things for a long time?

I really have to force myself to do these tasks and it's hard to make myself do it _____

I procrastinate and put off these tasks until the last moment possible even when it makes me anxious knowing I need to get it done _____

8. Distracted Easily _____

I get very easily distracted by things around me like conversations, TV, radio, movement, clutter, etc... _____

I can't have a conversation if music is playing or other conversations are going on around me _____

I need relative isolation to get much done _____

Just about anything can get my mind off of what I'm doing _____

It's really hard to get back to a task if I take a break _____



I forget a lot of things in my daily routine like chores, work, appointments, or obligations _____

I forget to bring things to work, such as work materials or projects that are due that day _____

I need to write regular reminders to do most activities or tasks because I'll forget if I don't _____

Even when I use a planner or to do list, I forget to check these and it causes problems _____

When I go to the store for something, I often end up coming home without the thing I went for _____

11. Can't Stay Seated _____

At work, when watching tv, reading, at a training, I can't seem to stay in my seat _____

Instead, I often walk around or stand up rather than sit _____

I have to force myself to remain seated and it is really challenging or uncomfortable to me _____

It's difficult for me to sit through a long meeting or lecture _____

I really try to avoid going to functions that require me to sit still for long periods of time _____

13. Can't Work Quietly _____

It's hard to work and be quiet. I often sing, hum, talk to myself, tap something, or make other noises _____

10. Fidgeting _____

I can't sit still or am always moving my hands or feet, or fidgeting in my chair _____

I often tap a pencil, click my pens, bounce my leg, etc... _____

I often play with my hair or clothing _____

I bite my nails even though I'm not anxious _____

12. Overly Active _____

I have to consciously keep myself from fidgeting or squirming _____

My body often feels restless, almost like having anxiety but no thoughts or worries with it _____

Inside I often feel restless _____

I feel more agitated if I cannot exercise on an almost daily basis _____

14. Driven By a Motor _____

It's really hard for me to slow down and just relax. I'm always going _____

I often have a lot of energy and feel like I need to be on the move, going, doing, etc... _____

Sometimes it seems like I'm driven by a motor _____



When doing something by myself like reading or watching TV, I sometimes feel more agitated or even sad/distressed _____

It feels like I always need to be busy after work or even while on vacation _____

15. Talks A Lot _____

I'm really talkative. It seems like I talk more than other people around me _____

Sometimes people complain about how much I talk and it causes problems for me _____

I'm often louder than the people I'm talking to _____

17. Can't Wait Your Turn _____

It's really hard for me to wait my turn in a conversation, in line, waiting for my food, or even driving _____

Delays really frustrate me _____

Sometimes the frustration I experience with delays or waiting my turn causes problems for me _____

I try really hard to avoid situations where I'll likely have to wait _____

It seems like it's impossible for me to relax _____

16. Blurts Out _____

I often give answers to questions before someone finishes asking _____

I often try to finish other people's sentences _____

I tend to interrupt or talk over people instead of waiting my turn in the conversation _____

I sometimes say things that don't fit into the conversation _____

I sometimes, without thinking, mimic other people's laugh or accent _____

I often do things without thinking _____

I am impulsive with things I say or things that I do _____

18. Interrupting Others _____

I often talk when others are talking, without waiting to be acknowledged _____

I find myself butting into others' conversations before I'm invited _____

I often interrupt others' activities or work even though it's not important or time sensitive _____

It's hard for me to wait to get my point across in _____



conversations or at meetings _____

*Because ADHD requires that these symptoms be present in childhood, place a separate mark beside any symptoms that were present during elementary and middle school.

3. How to Find a Doctor



It can be challenging to find a doctor who feels comfortable and knowledgeable about ADHD which means that getting a good assessment for ADHD can be difficult. Don't get discouraged! You may be fortunate and get a great assessment with a fantastic doctor on the first try. You might also get a doctor who doesn't understand ADHD, has some misconceptions about it, or doesn't believe it actually exists. Keep pushing forward.

In an effort to help you get the assessment you need with a doctor who is familiar with ADHD, I've put together a list of strategies to try. Hopefully this helps lessen the chances of running into multiple doctors who aren't as helpful as you need.

Sometimes the best place to start is the doctor you already have, so long as you've experienced them to be open, trustworthy, and really listen to you. They may or may not be comfortable diagnosing ADHD. If they aren't comfortable diagnosing it themselves, they may be familiar with a great assessment resource in your area.

If you aren't comfortable with your primary care doctor or don't feel confident in bringing this up with them, no worries--I've got some other ideas for you!

Ask your ADHD friends who they see. If you have a friend (preferably an adult) who has been diagnosed and treated for ADHD, find out who they see for therapy or medication. It's likely that clinician is more familiar with ADHD and may be a good place to start.

No friends with ADHD, no problem. Read on...

Use the Internet Strategically. I've got a few ways of doing this here. In larger areas, you may be blessed (as I am) with an ADHD specific organization. You'll often find this with a google search for "ADHD doctor near me." Smaller areas are less likely to have this kind of organization but it may still be worth a search.



The Second option is to use a resource like Psychology today and search for a clinician that lists ADHD as something they work with. If a clinician talks about ADHD on their site or shares that they have ADHD, they may be a good place to start.

When you find someone you are interested in, give them a call and ask them questions like “Do you assess for ADHD?” “How many adults with ADHD have you worked with?” If they don’t assess for ADHD, ask if they are familiar with someone in the area that is knowledgeable about diagnosing ADHD in adults.

There are a few ADHD websites that have professional directories that may be worth looking at. Keep in mind, if you are in a rural area, these directories may not be as helpful unless you are willing to travel a bit. These include:

<https://directory.additudemag.com/>

<https://add.org/professional-directory/>

<https://chadd.org/professional-directory/>

If you have trouble finding a professional who understands, don’t let it stop you from moving forward. Most adults who are finally diagnosed with ADHD ended up having to go through several doctors and several misdiagnoses before discovering they had ADHD. It’s unfortunate but if you find yourself in the office with a doctor who doesn’t believe ADHD exists, doesn’t think adults have it, or you hear them communicating wrong information about ADHD, that means you need to keep looking for the right doctor.

If, on the other hand, you find yourself in an assessment with a doctor who is really listening and seems to be knowledgeable about ADHD but they tell you that your challenge is not ADHD, read on because I have more information for you.



4. When it isn't ADHD

You found a doctor you trust and believe they are knowledgeable about ADHD but they tell you that you don't have it..now what?

1. Ask your doctor for education to help you understand why they don't believe you have ADHD. This can be really valuable feedback that can help you feel confident in your doctor and their role in your treatment.

If they can tell you why they don't believe it's ADHD (and they aren't spouting off ridiculous nonsense about how adults don't have ADHD) in a way that is thought out and specific to you, ask them if they can help you discover why you are struggling with the symptoms that lead you to talk with them. Just because it's not ADHD doesn't mean you are struggling with similar symptoms and need to figure out an effective course of treatment.

2. There are a number of other issues that mimic ADHD so don't get caught up in the downward spiral of it being in your head or something you will never be able to identify. This list is not comprehensive but some ideas to talk to your doctor about include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sensory Processing Disorder● Post Traumatic Stress Disorder● Anxiety● Depression● OCD● Bipolar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Seizure Disorders● Iron Deficiency Anemia● Celiac Disease● Thyroid Diseases● Allergies● Learning Disorders● Hearing or Vision Impairments● Side effects of Medications
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Food Allergies● Auditory Processing Disorder● Autism Spectrum● Sleep Disorders● Genetic Defects● Vitamin B Deficiencies● Tourette's Syndrome● Improper diet (too much sugar/caffeine, not enough valuable nutrition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hypoglycemia● Substance Abuse● POTS● Some Spinal Problems● Metabolic Disorders● Diabetes● Heart Disease● Head injuries● Fetal Alcohol Syndrome● PANS/PANDAS
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3. Finally, if your doctor is telling you that your symptoms are a result of something you've already been diagnosed with-- and treated for-- with no improvement, consider a full psychological evaluation with a psychologist. This can help identify if the current diagnosis is the most accurate one and/or if there are any other challenges you are experiencing that are complicating your treatment response. And, of course, talk to your doctor about your frustration with ongoing symptoms despite treatment.

Next, I've included information for you doctor including the diagnostic criteria for ADHD (so they don't have to look it up), how to use the questionnaire you filled out (don't forget to bring it with you to your appointment), and information on some of the common misconceptions health professionals still have about ADHD and why it's important to assess for it.



The Doctor's Guide:

Research and Information To Help with the Diagnosis Of ADHD in Adults

In this resource you will find:

1. How to use the questionnaire your patient has given you with the DSM-V criteria for ADHD, it's presentations, and severity
2. Research on the common misconceptions health professionals have about adult ADHD
3. The importance of treating ADHD and the major consequences patient's experience when left untreated



1. Your Guide to the Patient Questionnaire

Each question your patient has rated on the provided questionnaire relates directly to one of the criteria for ADHD listed in the DSM-V. The first 9 symptoms correspond with the Inattentive Symptoms listed and the last 9 related to the criteria for hyperactivity and impulsivity.

I am providing you with the criteria for ADHD from the DSM-V for your convenience. I recommend putting the questionnaire that your patient has brought directly beside the DSM-V criteria to simplify your assessment.

I have encouraged your patient to have someone they are very close to review this questionnaire for their perspective on your patient's struggles with each of the symptoms listed to help gain a clearer picture of how much these symptoms impact your patient. These should be marked separately.



2. DSM-V Criteria for ADHD

→ **Adults and Adolescents** must meet criteria for at least 5 symptoms in either category (if predominantly inattentive or hyperactive) **OR** 5 more symptoms in both categories (if combined type).

→ **Children** must show 6 or more symptoms in either category (if predominantly inattentive or hyperactive), **OR** both categories (if combined type).

→

Inattentiveness

- Often has trouble holding attention with tasks, conversations, or social activities.
- Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, at work, or with other activities.
- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
- Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (e.g., loses focus, side-tracked).
- Often has trouble organizing tasks and activities.
- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period of time (such as big projects, responsibilities, or work tasks).
- Often loses things necessary for tasks and activities (e.g. wallets, keys, important paperwork, eyeglasses, mobile telephones).
- Is often easily distracted
- Is often forgetful in daily activities.

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity:

- Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet, or squirms in seat.
- Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected (such as during meetings at work).
- Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate
Chronic feelings of restlessness that may or may not lead to being physically active in situations where it is not appropriate (i.e. walking around in a meeting, or balancing on one foot in a lecture).
- Often unable to work or take part in leisure activities quietly (ie, humming, whistling, pen clicking, or other sound effects)
- Is often “on the go” acting as if “driven by a motor”.



- ❑ Often talks excessively (and may say things impulsively that they later regret).
- ❑ Often blurts out an answer before a question has been completed (i.e. assuming what a person is about to say and saying it for them in a conversation)
- ❑ Often has trouble waiting his/her turn.
- ❑ Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or activities)

In addition, the following conditions must be met:

- ❑ Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present before age 12 years.
- ❑ Several symptoms are present in two or more setting, (e.g., at home, school or work; with friends or relatives; in other activities).
- ❑ There is clear evidence that the symptoms interfere with, or reduce the quality of, social, school, or work functioning.
- ❑ The symptoms do not happen only during the course of schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder. The symptoms are not better explained by another mental disorder (e.g. Mood Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Dissociative Disorder, or a Personality Disorder).

Based on the types of symptoms, three kinds (presentations) of ADHD can occur:

- ❑ **Combined Presentation:** if enough symptoms of both criteria inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity were present for the past 6 months
- ❑ **Predominantly Inattentive Presentation:** if enough symptoms of inattention, but not hyperactivity-impulsivity, were present for the past six months
- ❑ **Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation:** if enough symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity but not inattention were present for the past six months.

Severity:



- ❑ **Mild:** Few symptoms beyond the required number for diagnosis are present and symptoms result in minor impairment at home, school, work and/or social settings.
- ❑ **Moderate:** Symptoms or impairment between “mild” and “severe” are present.
- ❑ **Severe:** Many symptoms are present beyond the number needed to make a diagnosis, or multiple symptoms are particularly severe, or symptoms extremely impair an individual at home, school, work and/or social settings.

3. Clearing Up Common Misconceptions

Many health professionals have some misguided beliefs about ADHD, especially as it relates to adults. Some important facts to keep in mind:

- Up to 75% of women with ADHD are still undiagnosed
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of children who are diagnosed will still struggle with ADHD as adults
- Adults with untreated ADHD may paradoxically be high achievers with advanced degrees and top level management. Most with ADHD will struggle to live up to their potential but having an advanced degree or owning your own business does not mean an individual cannot have ADHD.
- Untreated ADHD correlates with a lower self esteem, increased substance abuse, self harm, and failed relationships.
- ADHD research shows that individuals with ADHD commonly struggle to regulate their emotions and are frequently misdiagnosed with an atypical mood disorder
- Individuals with ADHD are more likely to struggle with secondary depression and anxiety due to the consequences of ADHD (the failed relationships, losing jobs, being shamed for being “stupid” or “ditzy”, fear of forgetting or losing things, feeling overwhelmed by everyday tasks and responsibilities, etc...)
- ADHD often runs in families. Many women only discover their own undiagnosed ADHD when their child is diagnosed and they are exposed to the criteria.



- Inattentive ADHD is often overlooked in clinical practice. No, all people with ADHD do NOT bounce off the walls and don't sit still. Inattentive ADHD is just as problematic as hyperactive ADHD.
- ADHD causes significant problems for a person over the course of their life. Untreated ADHD makes an individual more likely to get divorced--in fact, 80% of these marriages end this way. With treatment for ADHD, however, that number is reduced back to that of the general population.
- Even Stimulant Medication--the Class C we are often afraid to prescribe--Makes an individual with ADHD less likely to become addicted to any substance (including the stimulant you prescribe).
- ADHD symptoms often lessen in intensity when boys hit puberty but INCREASE after puberty in girls and women.
- Adults with ADHD have more car accidents than those without ADHD, even when other disorders are taken into account. In fact, the results of untreated symptoms of ADHD while driving often resemble that of driving while intoxicated.
- Untreated ADHD corresponds with a higher risk for suicide.
- 80% of adults with ADHD have a comorbid condition
- Many people with ADHD have an average IQ despite underperforming in school or work. Some have above average IQ and may be able to mask their symptoms from others. In this case, they are more likely to appear frazzled, anxious, and overwhelmed while meeting deadlines, achieving high grades, and appearing put together.