

WHAT IS ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterised by challenges with inattention, hyperactivity, or impulsivity to the extent that it affects our functioning day-to-day, such as at work or in our relationships.

ADHD is not an “illness” that can be cured or made to go away; rather, a person who has ADHD has a brain that is wired to think and behave differently.

In the clinical sense, ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition, and people can be diagnosed as inattentive-type, hyperactive/impulsive-type or combined-type ADHD. ADHD is also considered to be part of the neurodivergence or neurodiversity umbrella.

- Around 6% of Kiwis are ADHD.
- ADHD can have both positive and negative aspects.
- The experience of ADHD varies from person to person.
- For many, ADHD can involve negative experiences and beliefs about oneself, which can lead to feelings of isolation, stress and anxiety.
- Despite misconceptions, ADHD is not about intelligence. There are many highly intelligent, successful ADHDers!



COMMON SIGNS

- Difficulty focusing and being easily distracted.
- Trouble with planning and organisation.
- Impulsivity, or doing things without thinking it through.
- Periods of intense mental or physical energy,
- Constantly fidgeting or moving around.
- Restlessness or feeling the need to always be busy.
- Being especially loud, talkative, or impatient.

Strengths vary but these are common strengths found among ADHD individuals:



- ✔ Creativity and being able to provide new, fresh views, particularly in problem-solving and teamwork.
- ✔ Spontaneous, fun, and able to make bold decisions.
- ✔ Working well under pressure, including excitement that can help to motivate others and an ability to complete a lot of work in intense time frames.

WHY DOES ADHD SEEM TO BE EVERYWHERE?

We are hearing a lot more about ADHD these days. Increased awareness, especially via social media, has led many adults to realise they could be ADHD and to seek formal assessment. For a long time, ADHD was assumed to mean hyperactive boys who couldn't sit still in class, so there are lots of people for whom their ADHD went undiagnosed in childhood. It's great more people are accessing the right support.

However, with all the talk on Instagram and TikTok, there has also been a rise in informal self-diagnosis. Caution is needed as many experiences and conditions overlap with ADHD: This is why an assessment with a qualified professional is needed.

INTERVENTION OPTIONS

- 🌀 **Medications:** Simultant medication treatments, like Rialtin, are the first-line treatment for ADHD and are known to provide effective symptom management.
- 🌀 **Psychological treatment:** Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based treatment that helps change behaviours to better manage ADHD.
- 🌀 **Lifestyle changes:** Improvements in lifestyle, such as establishing a routine, regular exercise, healthy food, and getting adequate sleep, can help.
- 🌀 **Ongoing support:** Having the right support is essential. Inclusive work policies, education on neurodiversity, and flexible working conditions can all help.

Note: If you suspect you are ADHD, speak to your GP or contact MindMatters Clinic to enquire about an assessment.