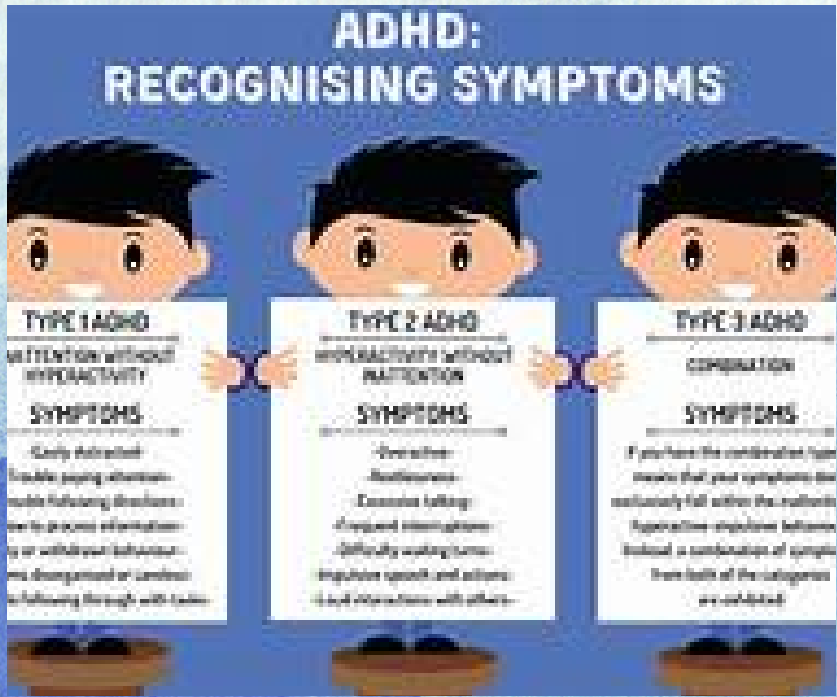


Supporting children with additional learning needs ECEY6006

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Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder ADHD

What is ADHD
ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is a neurological condition that affects how the brain functions and develops. It impacts a child’s ability to concentrate, control impulses, and manage their energy levels. Children with ADHD may have trouble with structure or routine. The symptoms of ADHD most commonly start in children before the age of 12 years old, although some cases are not diagnosed until adolescence. ADHD is often less recognised in girls than boys. This may be because girls with ADHD are more likely to exhibit inattentive symptoms, which can be harder to detect, while boys often display both inattentive and hyperactive symptoms, making their condition more noticeable (NHS, 2025).



Camhsprofessionals.co.uk (2021)

How ADHD Affects Children
Children with ADHD may experience challenges with:
· Attention and focus- They may find it difficult to concentrate, follow instructions, or complete tasks.
· Impulse control- Children may act without thinking, may become loud or disruptive, or struggle with taking turns.
· Hyperactivity- Some children will seem like they are constantly on the move, they are unable to sit still or talk excessively.
· Routine and structure- Some children may have difficulty with daily routines or organise their time well (Centre, 2022).

Types of ADHD

For a child to be diagnosed with ADHD, they would have to show several symptoms over a period of time, and those symptoms would interfere with daily life in multiple settings for example, at home, school or social situations. These symptoms are generally grouped into three categories (Koseva 2023).

- Inattentive:**
- Forgetfulness
 - Being easily distracted
 - Struggling to be organised
 - Daydreaming

This form of ADHD is more commonly diagnosed, and the child may have some or no symptoms of hyperactivity. The symptoms of inattentive ADHD can interfere with a child’s daily life and day to day functioning. However, these symptoms may not always be obvious to parents or early years educators for example, a child daydreaming, not completing tasks, poor academic performance could be mistaken behaviour by a teacher, and they could be seen as lazy or unmotivated rather than the teacher recognising the challenges they face everyday to complete schoolwork. At home parents or siblings may misunderstand a child’s forgetfulness or trouble following rules or routines such as brushing teeth, cleaning their bedroom as an example. All these tasks can be too overwhelming to process or remember for a child with ADHD. This can lead to the child feeling frustrated and anxious when others don’t understand their difficulties, or they may develop low self esteem from repeated failure or criticism which can cause a child with inattentive ADHD to shut down, keeping their feelings hidden from parents or teachers which could lead to emotional and mental health issues. Inattentive ADHD can affect every area of a child’s life including their relationships, academically and how they feel emotionally. As these symptoms are often quiet or subtle these children are at risk of being overlooked and misunderstood. Therefore, early recognition, empathy and support are key in helping these children succeed (Cleveland clinic 2024).

- Hyperactive:**
- Fidgeting
 - Talking excessively
 - Interrupting others
 - Inability to stay seated
 - Running around or climbing
 - Difficulty playing quietly

Hyperactivity is one of the more recognised symptoms of ADHD, Hyperactivity along with impulsive behaviours refers to an unusually amount of inappropriate level of physical activity, the child may need constant stimulation, they may be restless, unable to sit down for a period of time, they constantly feel the need to move around, excessive talking, running around and climbing at inappropriate times. These behaviours are frequent and will interfere with the child’s ability to function at home, at school or at a social setting. Although many young children can have difficulty paying attention, they may not be happy to take turns, or they can be fidgety and unable to sit still. However, children who are diagnosed with ADHD are considered to differ in their symptoms of hyperactivity as the symptoms are noticeably more frequent than expected for their age or development. These symptoms actively impact the child’s day to day life at home, school and relationships they develop (Elmaghraby 2022). It is considered that the symptoms of hyperactivity are more recognisable in younger children and in boys more than girls, which can lead to earlier recognition and diagnosis for these children

- Combined presentation.**
- Trouble focusing
 - Forgetfulness
 - Disorganisation
 - Fidgeting
 - Talking excessively
 - Acting without thinking

This type of ADHD is diagnosed when a child shows both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive behaviours. These symptoms are considered to be the most common form of ADHD, especially in children, and makes up approximately 50-75% of all ADHD diagnoses (NeuroLaunch ed 2024). According to The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2022), a child should have at least six symptoms from each category which are present for at least six months, and those symptoms interfere with the child’s daily functioning at home, school or social settings. Children with combined symptoms often struggle more significantly in school due to the challenges with academic and behaviour issues, these children are more likely to be diagnosed earlier than those children that present with inattentive symptoms alone (NeuroLaunch ed 2024).

Impacts and barriers of ADHD

Children who are diagnosed with ADHD often struggle with concentration, organisation and completing tasks, this can impact their academic performance resulting in low self-esteem, and delays in development which can impact higher education and lifelong learning. Academic and cognitive functioning is considered one of the most documented areas of impairment for children with ADHD. Other areas that are affected are social functioning, children with ADHD can struggle with social interaction with peers, they may be rejected and are considered to be at an increased risk of bullying or isolation. This can lead to mental health problems in the future (Ahmed *et al* 2022). As well as the social barriers there are barriers that affect education, diagnostic barriers and barriers related to treatment and support for example, educational barriers could include the lack of teacher training, many educators don’t have adequate training to recognise the symptoms of ADHD which could lead to the misunderstanding of the behaviours associated with ADHD. This would result in delayed or missed diagnosis and treatment. Barriers related to diagnosis and treatment could be the limited access to mental health services, there could be stigma related to ADHD as some families may fear that their child will be labelled or worry about the side affects of medication (Kamimura-Nishimura, et al 2023).

How ADHD Affects The Brain

Prefrontal Cortex:
Responsible for organization, cognitive flexibility, self-control, & maintaining attention.

Reticular Activating System:
Major relay system among the many pathways that enter & leave the brain that is responsible for arousal & consciousness. A deficiency in this region can cause inattention, impulsivity, or hyperactivity.

Basal Ganglia:
Helps regulate communication within the brain. Responsible for motor control, facilitating movement, and inhibiting competing movements.

Limbic System:
Responsible for regulating emotions. A deficiency in this region might result in restlessness, inattention, or emotional volatility.

