What Are the Three Different Types of ADHD?

by ERIC PATTERSON

The Three Types of ADHD

You think you know all there is to know about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). You have talked to some friends, watched a few documentaries, and even met with your primary care doctor about the condition, its symptoms, and the effects it can have on your life.

It's true – you've done a lot in the quest to know more about ADHD, but are you sure you're getting the correct information? The American Psychiatric Association (APA) sets the standard of diagnosis on the subject of ADHD, so if you don't fully understand the APAs guidelines, you may be missing part of the puzzle.

ADHD: A Multifaceted Condition

Some mental health diagnoses are fairly simple and straightforward. Depression, for example, has nine symptoms and someone needs to only have a handful to meet the criteria for diagnosis. ADHD is not so simple.

ADHD has 18 separate and unique symptoms. These symptoms are divided into two groups by their type and influence on the individual.

Symptoms of inattention are the first section of ADHD. These symptoms will show in multiple parts of a person's life, not just at home or school. Inattentive symptoms include:

- Failing to pay close attention to details/makes careless mistakes
- Struggling to maintain attention for long periods
- Not listening when spoken to
- Not following through with instructions
- Having problems staying organized on tasks
- Avoiding most activities that require mental effort
- Losing important items often
- Getting distracted by sounds or sights in the environment
- Being forgetful during the day

The next category of ADHD symptoms is hyperactivity and impulsivity. The symptoms include:

- Fidgeting when sitting still
- Difficulty staying in seat
- Running and climbing when staying still is expected
- Inability to play quietly
- Constantly on the go with high energy
- Talking excessively
- Blurting out answers or opinions

- Difficulty waiting their turn
- Frequently interrupting or intruding in others' conversations

You may look at these symptoms and say, "Geez. The symptoms of ADHD seem like normal, everyday issues."

In a way you are correct. That is why you need a professional mental health specialist to see the difference between appropriate and inappropriate levels of ADHD symptoms.

The Three Types of ADHD

Based on the symptoms stated above, there are three types of ADHD. A person can only receive one diagnosis at a time.

ADHD With Combined Presentation

The first type of ADHD is called ADHD with combined presentation. With this type of ADHD, the individual qualified for six or more of the inattentive symptoms **and** six or more of the hyperactivity/ impulsivity symptoms.

ADHD with combined presentation is the prototypical person with ADHD. They will struggle to pay attention at school, they will fail to complete household tasks, and they will struggle to sit still and stay quiet.

Because of these limitations, this person will get in trouble at school, have low academic performance, and lack relationships with friends. All aspects of their lives will be affected by ADHD symptoms.

ADHD With Predominately Hyperactive/Impulsive Presentation

Some people will have 6 or more symptoms of hyperactivity but not as many inattentive symptoms. These people receive the diagnosis of ADHD with predominately hyperactive/impulsive presentation.

People with this type of ADHD will show a fine ability to pay attention and focus, especially for shorter periods of time, but they will have boundless energy, poor social skills, and fidget often. They might have good grades at school while still getting in trouble for unwanted behaviors in the classroom.

ADHD With Predominately Inattentive Presentation

If someone has six or more symptoms of inattention and five or fewer symptoms of hyperactivity, they will have the diagnosis of ADHD with predominately inattentive presentation. This type of ADHD is challenging to identify and diagnosis because these people kids are normally quiet in the classroom. It may seem they are paying attention, but they not focused and not learning, leading to poor grades.

Even though these children have poor attention, they will be able to focus on some things like:

- TV
- Video games
- Apps
- Electronics

Kids with ADHD frequently seek out these activities because they don't really require attention. They provide endless stimulation, which feels good for someone with ADHD.

Adult ADHD

Contrary to what you may have heard, there is no condition called adult ADHD. Many adults have ADHD, but the condition always starts in childhood with significant symptoms beginning before the age of 12.

People with attention or hyperactivity issues presenting later in life may be experiencing symptoms related to other mental health issues like:

- Depression – The condition affects attention and decision-making skills.
- Anxiety – Anxiety disorders trigger fidgeting and feelings of restlessness.
- Bipolar disorder – This diagnosis influences attention, impulsive behaviors, and energy levels.

A number of physical health issues or high stress can also result in symptoms that resemble ADHD.

As mentioned, if you are concerned ADHD is affecting your life or the life of a loved one, seek out a thorough evaluation from an experienced mental health professional. Only they can diagnose the condition and set you on the path towards helpful treatments.