Separating Myth From Fact When It Comes to ADHD

by ALEXANDER BEIGA

What Are the Most Common ADHD Myths?

Many parents struggle to separate myth from fact when it comes to children with ADHD. One of the most common myths is that ADHD is the result of poor parenting or behavioral deficiencies which a child will outgrow.

The truth is that ADHD is a medical condition resulting from a combination of genetics and brain chemistry that will remain part of a child's psychological makeup as he or she matures into an adult.

Many other myths are surrounding this condition, and it's vital that you overcome these misconceptions to help your child's academic and social development.

16 Common ADHD Myths Debunked

Here are sixteen of the most common myths about ADHD:

1. **ADHD is only present in hyperactive children.** There are three types of ADHD: predominantly hyperactive, predominantly inattentive, and mixed hyperactive-inattentive. Thus, it is possible for a child to have ADHD which affects their attention span without being accompanied by hyperactivity.
2. **ADHD affects only boys.**While girls are more likely to have the predominantly inattentive form of ADHD, and while ADHD rates are higher in boys than girls, children of both sexes can have ADHD. Which brings us to our next myth...
3. **Girls have lower rates and less severe ADHD than boys.** Even after it was discovered that girls could get ADHD, many still believed that ADHD was different in girls. Well actually, *it's not*. Although girls are affected slightly differently. For example, boys are more likely to "get in trouble," while girls are more likely to have thoughts of suicide.
4. **Children with ADHD are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol when they become teenagers.** This is a case where the exact opposite of the prevailing myth is true. Children who take medication to control their ADHD are more likely not to abuse alcohol or drugs as teenagers. On the other hand, children with untreated ADHD are at increased risk for these behaviors, which is a major reason why you should be proactive in treating the condition if your child is diagnosed.
5. **Medications can cure ADHD.**While stimulant medications and other drugs have proven very effective in relieving ADHD symptoms, they are not a cure for the condition — they are only a management tool, and should be treated as such.
6. **ADHD results from a lack of discipline.** While you will need to adopt specialized parenting strategies to help control your child's condition, a lack of discipline is not the root cause of ADHD.
7. **ADHD medications stunt growth.**Recent studies have proven that children who take ADHD medications will eventually grow to their full and natural size. Any growth deficiencies linked to the drug have been shown to be temporary in clinical studies.
8. **ADHD results from excessive sugar intake.**While it is recommended that a child with ADHD be kept on a lower-sugar diet, the condition does not arise as the result of high sugar intake. Children with ADHD

have clinically proven brain chemistry deficiencies, of which sugar has definitively been ruled as a possible cause.

9. **ADHD is over-diagnosed in children.** Diagnoses for ADHD in children have gone up in recent years. But it's not because doctors are misdiagnosing kids left and right. As mentioned in myth numbers two and three, it was only recently discovered that ADHD is also found in both boys and girls. So now more and more girls are *correctly* diagnosed with ADHD.
10. **Children outgrow ADHD.** This is false (for the most part.) Studies have proven that the majority of children *don't* outgrow ADHD. What happens is most adults learn coping mechanisms and new skills which help them offset the symptoms of their ADHD.
11. **ADHD is a new disorder.** ADHD was first described in the 1700's, yet it certainly existed long before then. Saying ADHD is "new" is like saying cancer is new. Cancer didn't just fall out of the sky, and neither did ADHD.
12. **ADHD is something children develop.** Over 70 percent to 90 percent of all cases of ADHD is hereditary. For the most part, a person is born with ADHD because they inherited it from their parents. The other 10% to 30% of cases, in theory, result from unhealthy pregnancies, low birth weight, and brain injury.
13. **ADHD is linked to low intelligence.** This is not true. Even when ADHD was first discovered, doctors noted how ADHD didn't affect a person's intelligence. And if that's not good enough for you, take a look at Emma Watson or Michael Jordan. Many people believe even Albert Einstein had ADHD.
14. **Children with ADHD can't pay attention.** It's not that people with ADHD can't pay attention to things. People with ADHD are easily able to focus on things that they find interesting. But if something bores them, chances are they'll have to put in a lot of effort to pay attention.
15. **Children with ADHD can't read an entire book.** (Yes I know this is related to the previous myth. I believe this deserves to be explicitly addressed.) You may or may not be surprised to find out that many people believe this. Of course, children with ADHD can read an entire book!
16. **ADHD prevents those who have it from living the life they want**. ADHD may make it *harder* (keyword harder) for someone to live their life the way they want to, but it doesn't *prevent.* In the end we all have something that makes our lives harder to live, do we not?

The Myths Are Debunked. Now What?

Before you go, it's important to remember that ADHD affects everybody differently depending on their personality. Because of this, some symptoms may be more severe or noticeable in one person than in another. Not every case of ADHD is identical.

If you have further questions about ADHD, or how to manage the condition in your child, ask your family doctor to connect you with additional support resources and sources of information. You can also try asking someone in our community; I'm sure they'd be happy to share their knowledge with you!