What Is Inattentive ADHD?

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Understanding What Inattentive ADHD Is

When we hear the term “ADHD,” we often associate it with hyperactivity. After all, one of the words in the actual diagnosis is “hyperactive” – “attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.”

But did you know that there are three types of ADHD? And one of those types does not necessarily mean that you are hyperactive…

The Three Types of ADHD

As previously mentioned, there are three types of ADHD. The type that we classically associate with ADHD is *hyperactive-impulsive ADHD.* This type manifests as a body in constant motion, hence the “hyperactive” part of the label.

Inattentive ADHD is what we used to call ADD, or attention deficit disorder. This type of ADHD lacks the hyperactivity, and the person has a tough time paying attention.

Combined ADHD is when the person has symptoms of both hyperactive-impulsive ADHD as well as inattentive ADHD.

Inattentive ADHD Symptoms

The hallmark symptom of inattentive ADHD is the inability to focus.

Diagnosis can be tricky, because inattentive ADHD sometimes mimics other mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, as well as vision and hearing disorders, and learning. Ruling out these disorders is important to receive the correct treatment.

Thus, receiving a diagnosis of inattentive ADHD can be tricky. Certain criteria must be met. Of the following symptoms, a physician will need to know that you have at least six to qualify for a diagnosis:

- Becomes easily distracted
- Is forgetful with day to day activities
- Misses important details
- Loses track of things
- Gets bored easily
- Avoids tasks that require focus
- Has trouble with organization, and staying organized
- Does not appear to be listening when spoken to
- Has difficulty following instructions

Inattentive ADHD Medications

Inattentive ADHD is most commonly treated with stimulants. It is important to note that stimulants *do not* cure inattentive ADHD, but for most people with inattentive ADHD, they help the brain focus better, as well as reduce the other symptoms that we discussed.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that 70 to 80 percent of people with ADHD who are treated with stimulants respond positively to treatment.

Examples of stimulants include Adderall (amphetamine and dextroamphetamine), and Concerta or Ritalin (methylamphetamine). Stimulants also have long-acting versions, which act for longer periods of time.

Like all medications, there is a risk of side effects. The most common side effects of stimulants include:

- Dry mouth.
- Irritability
- Mood changes.
- Facial tics.
- Vocal tics.
- Decreased appetite.

Treatment of Inattentive ADHD without Medications

It is a commonly held belief that treatment of all types of ADHD should involve medication as well as therapy. Thus, the following tips are often used in conjunction with medical therapy.

However, if you make the decision, along with your physician, that you will treat your ADHD without medication, it is essential to use some of these “tricks” to stay on track:

- ***Decrease distractions.*** If you have a task that you need to stay focused on, it is essential to cut out distractions. This means turning off the TV and the radio. Power off the computer. Turn your phone on silent. All of these things are distractors and can kick inattentive ADHD symptoms into high gear.
- ***Establish a routine.*** A routine makes it easier to stay focused. If you know that each day you have breakfast at 8:00 am, then you take a walk after breakfast, then take a shower, it becomes habitual – and it is easier to stay on task. Write it down, if necessary.
- ***Get organized.*** Easier said than done, right? Ask for help from a significant other, friend, or family member, if you need to. And tie it into your routine – for example, put your water bottle in the same place every day, so that when you take a walk, you can grab it on your way out the door.
- ***Make “to-do” lists.*** Keep lists of your daily tasks, chores, appointments, and whatever else is important. And keep them handy so that you can reference them and add to them regularly.

Treatment of Inattentive ADHD using Natural Therapies

As we discussed, prescription medications are found to be useful – but they can be fraught with side effects. There have been few studies that research the long-term effects of stimulants, but one Australian study, published in 2010, found that people medicated for ADHD had higher diastolic blood pressure than their counterparts who were not medicated for ADHD, as well as lower self-esteem.

You could choose to forgo food coloring and preservatives. Although studies are few, a Mayo Clinic study indicated that certain ingredients seem to increase hyperactivity in children, specifically:

- Sodium benzoate
- FD&C Yellow No. 6 (sunset yellow)
- D&C Yellow No. 10 (quinoline yellow)
- FD&C Yellow No. 5 (tartrazine)

- FD&C Red No. 40 (allura red)

Food allergies may also contribute to ADHD symptoms. Pinpointing these allergies, and then avoiding foods containing these allergens, may improve symptoms. Common foods that seem to contribute to ADHD symptoms include milk, eggs, chocolate, and “foods containing salicylates, including berries, chili powder, apples and cider, grapes, oranges, peaches, plums, prunes, and tomatoes.”

And increase your mind-body exercise! Yoga and tai chi are great examples. There are several small studies with promising results that indicate that both types of exercise promote reductions in hyperactivity, anxiety, and social problems.

But what about supplements? If you do a Google search, you’ll likely find several supplements that are thought to help, but research is mixed at this time.