ADHD and autism

Frequently asked questions

UNDERSTANDING ADHD AND AUTISM

01 Can you have ADHD without being hyperactive?

Yes. There are three presentations of ADHD. One is called hyperactive-impulsive, one is called inattentive, and one is called combined.

People who have hyperactive ADHD may have difficulty sitting still, feel restless and become bored easily.

Those with inattentive ADHD have difficulties maintaining their attention, organising themselves, and can have problems with memory and task completion.

Those with combined ADHD experience both.

02 Can you have both ADHD and autism?

Yes. This is sometimes called AuDHD and describes someone who has both ADHD and autism. They are two separate neurodevelopmental conditions that can occur together.

03 Why are ADHD and autism sometimes missed in women?

Historically, much of the research was conducted on men and boys, so the experiences that women had were not as well documented.

Now that they are being documented, we're finding that women are often being diagnosed later in life.

Society has also previously expected women to cope with the difficulties they're facing, which has led to masking as a way of hiding or compensating for those difficulties.

Perimenopause and menopause can also make ADHD symptoms more noticeable, and some autistic women report increased difficulties during this time. This can mean that masking becomes less effective, leading women to seek an assessment later in life.

04 Can you be diagnosed for the first time as an adult?

Absolutely. Some people only recognise the possibility of ADHD or autism in their thirties, forties, fifties or even later.

There's no right age to get diagnosed. There are coping strategies and support that can help at any age, as well as medication.

GETTING A DIAGNOSIS

05 How do I get an ADHD or autism assessment through the NHS?

The first port of call would be your GP. They can discuss your experiences and the referral options available in your area.

Please also see the Thinking about an ADHD or Autism assessment document on this website.

06 Is NHS Right to Choose still available?

In England, it is, yes. However, eligibility, provider capacity and local arrangements can affect the amount of access people have.

It is worth discussing with your GP what options are open to you.

07 Are private ADHD and autism assessments reliable?

The quality of these varies. A thorough assessment should explore your developmental history, current difficulties and any other possible explanations.

Paying privately does not guarantee a diagnosis, and a private assessment isn't automatically unreliable. However, concerns have been raised about the quality of some private assessments and whether financial incentives could influence diagnostic decisions. This does not establish that private assessments generally result in more positive diagnoses.

08 What happens if an assessment concludes that I don't have ADHD or autism?

You should receive an explanation of the findings and any other identified difficulties, and you can request a second opinion if you disagree.

The clinician assessing you should have gone over this possibility with you beforehand, because it is always a possibility.

But at least you are one step closer to realising what it is that's happening for you if it isn't ADHD or autism. There's obviously something still going on which warrants attention.

09 How long does an NHS assessment take?

Waiting times can vary considerably by location and provider. Some people can wait months or years.

Your GP should be able to explain the local pathway, although they may not know the exact waiting time.

LIFE AFTER DIAGNOSIS

10 Will I automatically receive ADHD medication if I'm diagnosed?

No. Medication is optional and is discussed with the ADHD specialist.

Not everybody needs or wants medication, and prescribing arrangements depend on the provider.

11 Can I get help without a formal diagnosis?

Absolutely. Counselling, practical coaching strategies and some workplace adjustments can be available without a diagnosis.

You can ask your GP about support while waiting for the assessment.

12 Can counselling help with ADHD or autism?

Counselling doesn't remove ADHD or autism, but it can help people explore associated difficulties such as anxiety, shame, self-esteem, relationship issues, emotional regulation and the effects of masking.

Explore counselling at Mallinder Counselling

Visit the website | Free 20-minute introductory call