

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Definition

ADHD is a medical diagnosis where a neurobiochemical imbalance results in difficulties with attention and impulse control. Most students with ADHD were diagnosed while in the public-school system. Some student's ADHD symptoms are stabilized by the use of medications that can improve the student's ability to focus and learn. However, the medications may be more effective at certain times of the day and there may be side effects such as weight loss or sleeplessness which can impact students overall functioning.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a persistent pattern of inattention.

Symptoms individuals may experience are:

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes.
- Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
- Does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish work.
- Difficulty organizing tasks and activities.
- Loses things; is forgetful.
- Is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity.

Symptoms individuals may experience are:

- Fidgets, squirms or leaves seat.
- Is "on the go" or acts as if "driven by a motor."
- Talks excessively.
- Interrupts or intrudes on others.

Documentation

Students with ADHD must provide an assessment done by a physician, psychiatrist or psychologist within the past five years. Documentation should include a psycho-educational assessment. With this documentation, clients may be eligible to access appropriate support services and possibly adaptive technology to reduce barriers to learning.

Student Strategies and Accommodations

- Meet with Accessibility Service Coordinator at least a month before starting your course. They can help you plan, provide support and possibly assist in accessing adaptive technology. It is your responsibility to provide appropriate documentation.
- Consider taking a reduced course load to decrease stress.
- Take your medication as prescribed by your physician. If you are questioning side effects or effectiveness, have a physician re-assess your needs. It is illegal to share prescription medication. Stimulants do not mix with drugs or alcohol. (Mixing cocaine and stimulants can kill!)
- Work with counselors, accessibility coordinator and/or the Learning Assistance instructor to develop strategies for study skills and time management. Regular appointments help you monitor goals and accomplishments.
- Break assignments down into small parts and set deadlines for each part.
- Make sure your study area is free from any distractions.
- Take frequent breaks. Stretch, move and then get back at your task.
- Use highlighters to mark key concepts.
- Activities like yoga or t'ai chi settle your mind and help you learn deep relaxation and breathing strategies that you can use when you are agitated.
- During class sit close to the instructor so you are not distracted.
- Discuss with the instructor that you may need to leave class briefly to take short breaks. Try to leave with a minimum of distraction.
- Accommodations may include
 - Record lectures and/or photocopy notes from a class mate.
 - Extra time and/or a quiet setting to write exams.
- Find your own personal strategies that help you concentrate, retain information, and use them consistently!

*These are suggestions only -- you are the best judge of what will work for you.

Instructor Strategies and Accommodations

- Student may need breaks especially during long lectures. Encourage seating arrangements that give student maximum focus on you, but also easy access to a door.
- Accommodations may include the use of recording devices in class.
- FM devices like those used for hearing impaired students have been shown to be very effective with minimizing distractions for students with ADHD.
- Be clear in course outlines, deadlines and expectations. Unexpected changes to routines cause stress.
- Encourage student to write tests in a quiet, separate setting with extra time.
- Frequent reinforcement can help ability to focus.
- Be patient with student who checks in often for clarifications and explanations.

- Give clear, but non-judgmental feedback to student if interruptions are excessive.
- Build positive relationship with student that acknowledges strengths and contributions.

Links

B.C. Ministry of Education, Special Education

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/adhd/what.htm>

LD Online ADHD Basics

<http://www.ldonline.org/adhdbasics>

Children & Adults with ADHD

<http://www.chadd.org//AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home>

BC Government ADHD Health Link

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/hw166083>