

# Fact Sheet

## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

### What is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

Attention Deficit Disorder is a condition which affects the parts of the brain that control attention and impulse (acting suddenly, without thinking about what the results might be). Younger children with ADHD are often hyper and constantly moving – they have great difficulty ever being still. Older children and adults with ADHD are unable to focus and stay on or complete tasks.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is not a learning disability. ADHD is a psychiatric disability – a medical condition - that needs to be diagnosed and treated by a medical doctor. However, we know that between 60 and 80 percent of individuals with ADHD have learning disabilities as well. Learners with ADHD need their instruction and evaluation adjusted to accommodate the effects of ADHD.

### Signs of ADD/ADHD

- Makes 'careless' mistakes
- Loses or forgets important things – memory problems
- Has trouble paying attention over a period of time
- Doesn't seem to be listening even when spoken to directly
- Easily distracted by noises or activities in the background – can't screen out the world
- Difficulty adapting to changes in routine
- Can't sit still, fidgets, is restless, makes irritating noises – tapping a pencil
- Has trouble taking turns in conversations – interrupts or talks too much
- Has trouble controlling his high level of energy
- Trouble following instructions
- Never seems to stop!
- Doesn't seem to learn from past experiences
- Begins tasks without getting all the instructions – impatient
- Acts or speaks without thinking of the results of these actions
- Never seems to complete an activity

## What specific strategies can help?

- ◆ Help the learner create structure – day planners, specific places to keep things, software reminder programs.
- ◆ Use colour to help organize information – coloured sections in binders, colour code different subjects, use coloured highlighters & pens.
- ◆ Create a work space that is free from distractions and disorder.
- ◆ Encourage learners to plan for the day, make lists.
- ◆ Encourage learners to create and use checklists for the steps involved in completing a task eg. Checklists of all the bills to be paid in a month.
- ◆ For people with difficulty with social skills, it may be helpful to have a trusted buddy or coach who could give a signal when they are acting or speaking inappropriately.
- ◆ Post schedules and try to follow them; schedule physical activities daily.
- ◆ Group an ADD learner with other learners who can stay on task.
- ◆ Give shorter tasks and give more time to do tasks.
- ◆ Practice activities or tasks before the learner has to perform them eg. phone calls, interview questions.
- ◆ Give clear instructions, with few steps – give the next stage of the instructions when each step is complete.
- ◆ Discuss learning disabilities, strengths and weaknesses and differences among people and encourage acceptance and non-judgement.
- ◆ Provide cooperative learning experiences in which learners can support each other.