

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



ADDvanced Solutions
Supporting you to find the answers

A Brief History of ADHD:

What is it and where does it come from?

ADHD has probably been around as long as there have been people! The exact cause of ADHD is not yet known. What we do know, however is that it tends to run in families, indicating that there must be a genetic link.

Studies have shown a difference in levels of dopamine in people with ADHD. This chemical carries signals between neurotransmitters in the brain and is important in regulating sleep, movement, mood and attention. It can have a major impact on the ability to learn.

In a minority of cases, there has been shown to be a link between significantly low birth weight (and other complications during pregnancy) and ADHD.

It was noted by Sir Alexander Crichton, a Scottish-born doctor as early as 1798 who called it '**mental restlessness**' in children. ADHD co-occurs in most other neurodevelopmental disorders, as well as in other diagnostic conditions and can dramatically affect the quality of life.

Restlessness and inattention was noticed and studied in children over the years, with ADHD characteristics initially being treated as bad behaviour and attention-seeking, or as the result of poor parenting. Our knowledge of what lies behind these characteristics has progressed and ADHD is now understood as a neurodevelopmental condition that can be supported and effectively managed.

The condition went through various name-changes, including '**hyperkinetic syndrome**' in the 1950's, and appeared in the second version of the DSM manual (the handbook used by health care professionals in the United States and much of the world as the authoritative guide to diagnosis) as '**hyperkinetic reaction of childhood**' in 1968,

Throughout the 60's and 70's (and beyond) there was a lot of controversy about the condition with some saying it was only due to poor parenting, and that medication was a way of keeping excited or badly behaved children under a 'chemical cosh'. However it has remained in the diagnostic manuals; in 1890 as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) (either hyperactive or non-hyperactive) in the DSM-3, then as **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** in the revised manual in 1987.

In 1994 ADHD appeared in the DSM-4 manual split into three different types: **combined, predominantly inattentive and predominantly hyperactive.**

The most recent diagnostic manual, the 2013 DSM-5, includes the three types of ADHD in both children and adults for the first time. It also allows for a person to be diagnosed with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) and ADHD. ADHD is listed in the new category of 'Neurodevelopmental Disorders', acknowledging the growing body of scientific evidence supporting the diagnosis.

ADHD is no longer considered to be bad behaviour caused by poor parenting, but as a neurodevelopmental condition that can be managed with a combination of appropriate strategies in the home, classroom and beyond. These strategies can include the appropriate and managed use of medication.

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