Self-Test for Women: Do I Have ADHD?

How to recognize the unique (and often missed) symptoms of ADHD in women—plus a checklist to share with your doctor.

From the ADHD Experts at

ADDITUDE

Strategies and Support *for* ADHD & LD

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A trusted source of advice and information for families touched by attention-deficit disorder—
and a voice of inspiration to help people with ADHD find success at home, at school, and on the job.

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Self-Test for Women: Do I Have ADHD?

How to recognize the unique (and often missed) symptoms of ADHD in women—plus a checklist to share with your doctor.

By Eunice Sigler and Sari Solden

ADHD is not a male disorder. In fact, women and men are equally likely to have ADHD, yet the latest research suggests that women suffer much greater emotional turmoil due to their symptoms—in large part because of dated misconceptions that ADHD is a "male disorder." Consequently, women with symptoms are more likely than men to go undiagnosed (or misdiagnosed), and less likely to receive appropriate treatment. These incomplete evaluations can lead to serious health risks.

Listen to a free expert webinar, "**The Secret Lives of Women with ADHD**" at **http://additu.de/secret**

"ADHD is still presumed to be a male disorder," says Fred Reimherr, M.D., director of the University of Utah Mood Disorders Clinic and the lead author of a study that found that ADHD has a disproportionate impact on women. "The women had a much more frequent history of having been diagnosed with other emotionally based psychiatric illnesses, such as depression or anxiety. I think those symptoms are often the things that a physician treating adults focuses on. A woman might come in presenting emotional symptoms, and the ADHD that's underneath might be missed."

Girls vs. Boys

Underdiagnosis of ADHD in women has its roots in childhood. Girls with ADHD tend to try harder than their male counterparts to compensate for or cover up symptoms. To keep up their grades, girls are often more likely to put in extra hours of studying and to ask their parents for help. In addition,

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girls are more likely to be "people pleasers," doing all they can to fit in—even if they feel "different."

Teachers are often the first to identify ADHD symptoms in children. Yet because ADHD is still largely considered a male disorder, they tend to recognize the disorder in boys more often than they do in girls. This is true whether girls exhibit the hyperactive (can't sit still), the inattentive (daydreaming in a corner), or the combined version of the disorder.

"Most people have a misperception that ADHD is a disorder of hyperactive elementary school-aged boys," says Patricia Quinn, M.D, a developmental pediatrician in Washington, D.C., and a leading expert in gender aspects of ADHD. "When they see behaviors in girls, even disruptive behaviors, the girls still go undiagnosed."

Pressure to Perform

On top of this, women face pressure from a society that sets Superwoman expectations. "The pressure on women to be organized, be self-controlled, and keep everybody else organized, is a societal expectation that's very deeply ingrained," says Kathleen Nadeau, Ph.D. "Women feel very much a failure if they can't keep their house in order. There is a tremendous toll associated with keeping up appearances, struggling, having embarrassing moments. Things like, 'I forgot to pick my kids up after soccer practice, and they were the only ones left standing out there.' It's a very public failure, and women are often not forgiven for these types of things. With a man, they'll say, 'Oh he's so busy, of course he forgot.'"

For more on ADHD in women, read Sari Solden's groundbreaking book ***Women with Attention Deficit Disorder: Embrace Your Differences and Transform Your Life***

The pain of feeling "different" from other women can often be too much to bear. Women with undiagnosed ADHD can develop anxiety, low self-esteem, or depression. They may be suffering as much—or more—than their male counterparts, but they're more likely to do so in silence.

But there is hope. The medical community is waking up to the fact that ADHD is a big problem for girls and that the condition often persists into adulthood, says Nadeau. For now, she says, any woman who suspects she has ADHD should educate herself about the condition—and consult a mental-health professional who specializes in the field.

Self-Test for Women

Do you have signs of ADHD? Does your daughter? Only a mental-health professional can tell for sure, but completing this do-it-yourself symptom checklist of common ADHD symptoms in women will give you a place to start.

NOTE: This test is not intended to diagnose or to replace the care of a health care professional.

The more statements you agree with, the more likely you are to have symptoms of ADHD. Be sure to share your completed checklist with a doctor.

- ☐ Time, money, paper, or "stuff" is dominating my life and hampering my ability to achieve my goals.
- ☐ I often shut down in the middle of the day feeling assaulted. Requests for "one more thing" put me over the top emotionally.
- ☐ I spend most of my time coping, looking for things, catching up, or covering up. I avoid people because of this.
- ☐ I have stopped having people over to my house because I'm ashamed of the mess.
- ☐ I have trouble balancing my checkbook.
- ☐ I often feel as if life is out of control, or that it's impossible to meet demands.
- ☐ I feel like I'm always at one end of a deregulated activity spectrum—either a couch potato or a tornado.
- ☐ I feel that I have better ideas than other people but am unable to organize them or act on them.
- ☐ I start each day determined to get organized.
- ☐ I have watched others of equal intelligence and education pass me by.

For more self-tests, visit **http://additu.de/quiz**

- ☐ I worry that I'll never fulfill my potential or meet my goals.
- ☐ I have often been thought of as selfish because I don't write thank-you notes or send birthday cards.
- ☐ I'm clueless as to how others manage to lead consistent, regular lives.
- ☐ I am often called "a slob" or "spacey." I feel like I'm just "passing for normal." I feel like I'm an impostor.
- ☐ All my time and energy is taken up with coping, staying organized, and holding it together, with no time for fun or relaxation.

For more information, check out ADDvance's **ADD/ADHD Checklist for Girls**, **ADD/ADHD Self-report Questionnaire for Teenage Girls**, *and* **Sari Solden**'s **Checklist for Women with ADHD**, *the list on which this one is based.*

SUPERMOM IS A MYTH.

Break free from the pressure by visiting **http://additu.de/adhd-mom**

ADDitude Special Reports Available Now

www.adhdreports.com

ADHD Medication and Treatment

The latest information on managing medication, starting behavior therapy, evaluating alternative treatments, and more.

You're relieved to know, finally, that your or your child's symptoms are due to ADHD. But now, you have questions—on everything from which medications are available to how to tell if they're working properly. In this comprehensive special report, you'll learn how to seek an accurate diagnosis and plan a treatment plan that's right for you or your child.

>> Learn more about this special report: **http://additu.de/treatment**

9 Conditions Often Diagnosed with ADHD

Depression. Bipolar Disorder. Anxiety. OCD. And five more conditions that often show up alongside attention deficit.

About 80 percent of individuals with ADHD are diagnosed with at least one other psychiatric condition at some time in their lives. This in-depth special report looks at the nine most common, outlining symptoms, treatment strategies, and differentiating features of each. Plus, strategies for living well with any mental health condition.

>> Learn More About This Special Report: **http://additu.de/related**

Mindfulness and Other Natural Treatments

The best non-medical treatments for ADHD, including exercise, green time, and mindful meditation.

Learn how mindfulness works on ADHD brains, and how to begin practicing it today. Plus, research the benefits of other alternative treatments like yoga and deep breathing exercises—including some designed especially for kids—as well as the science behind each natural therapy.

>> Learn more about this special report: **http://additu.de/mindfulness**

FREE *ADDitude* Downloadable Booklets

Does Your Child Have a Learning Disability?
Use this self-test to find out if your child's problems at school may be due to LD.

Is It Depression?
Depression is a serious mood disorder, but it's not always easy to recognize.

Who Can Treat ADHD?
Doctor? Psychiatrist? Coach? Learn who can treat your attention deficit.

You Know You Have ADHD When...
Real ADHDers share personal stories highlighting the lighter side of living with attention deficit.

Is It Adult ADHD?
Habitually disorganized? Always running late? It could be ADHD.

Celebrities Living with ADHD
Famous people on how they found success with attention deficit.

It's *Not* ADHD: 3 Common Diagnosis Mistakes
Doctors are sometimes too quick to diagnose ADHD. Read up on common misdiagnoses.

Find these and many more free ADHD resources online at:
http://additu.de/freedownloads

FREE ADHD Webinar Replays from *ADDitude:*

Just Diagnosed? How to Succeed with Adult ADHD

>> http://additu.de/just-diagnosed

A late-in-life ADHD diagnosis doesn't mean it's all over! In honor of ADHD Awareness Month, Michele Novotni, Ph.D., shares strategies for becoming a self-advocate, so you can live your best life with ADHD.

Survival Strategies for Moms with ADHD

>> http://additu.de/adhd-moms

Mothers with ADHD, especially those parenting ADHD children, often put the needs of others before themselves. Despite good intentions, when moms leave their own ADHD untreated, the whole family can suffer. In this webinar, hosted by Ellen Littman, Ph.D., learn to let go of society's expectations of being "perfect" and focus on your own accomplishments.

Managing ADHD Sensitivities and Emotions

>> http://additu.de/sensitive

Does the smallest thing not going your way set off the waterworks? It might be your ADHD. Zoë Kessler explains why ADHD adults often experience emotional sensitivities and shares some strategies to help you cope.

What to Treat First?

>> http://additu.de/6k

ADHD is frequently accompanied by one or more comorbid conditions, such as depression, anxiety, learning disabilities, or ODD. Dr. Larry B. Silver explains what to look for, and how to treat dual diagnoses—as well as how dealing with comorbidities can affect life for an ADHD child or adult.

7 Fixes for Self-Defeating ADHD Behaviors

>> http://additu.de/brown

Are your bad habits setting you up for failure? Find out what behaviors to watch for, and seven simple changes that can help you reach your full potential and put you on the path to success. Entrepreneur and ADHD coach Alan Brown teaches "fix-it" strategies that he used to cope with his own ADHD.

FREE ADHD Newsletters from *ADDitude*

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Adult ADHD and LD
Expert advice on managing your household, time, money, career, and relationships

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How to get classroom accommodations, finish homework, work with teachers, find the right schools, and much more

Treating ADHD
Treatment options including medications, food, supplements, brain training, mindfulness and other alternative therapies