



ADHD: Impulsivity and Inattention

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Overview

Impulsivity

Impulsivity refers to acting without thinking first. Impulsivity in a person who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is highly likely to continue into adulthood.

People with symptoms of impulsivity often:

- Are impatient with waiting their turn or waiting in line.
- Blurt out answers before questions have been completed.
- Interrupt or intrude on others, such as butting into conversations or games.
- Engage in reckless, risky, or antisocial activities without thinking about the consequences. For example, children and teens may be suspended or expelled from school for irresponsible behavior. Impulsiveness may also affect driving skills and general safety.
- Have temper outbursts.

Inattention

Inattention related to ADHD is having a shorter-than-expected attention span based on the person's age.

People with symptoms of inattention may:

- Have trouble listening when spoken to directly.
- Be easily distracted and have trouble staying on task. For example, a person may fail to finish projects or may make careless mistakes related to schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace despite having understood instructions and shown a willingness to do the work.
- Be forgetful. They might lose things that are needed for tasks or activities, such as toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools.
- Avoid, dislike, or be reluctant to do tasks that require sustained mental effort, such as schoolwork or homework.
- Overconcentrate on certain activities that don't tax their attention, such as television or computer games. It may be hard to get them to stop and do something else.

Related Information

- [ADHD: Helping Your Child Get the Most From School](#)

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Growth and Development, Ages 11 to 14 Years
- Growth and Development, Ages 6 to 10 Years
- Medicines for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

Credits

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