



## **10 Medical Conditions That Can Present as ADHD!**

**Q.** My nephew was diagnosed by his teacher as having ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). It turned out to be a hearing loss due to a middle ear infection. How can this mistake happen?

**A.** First, a teacher is not qualified to make an ADHD diagnosis. Only a doctor, usually a pediatric neurologist, is permitted to make such a diagnosis. In the school setting, a psychologist who has extensive experience working with ADHD students can also make a reasonable diagnosis of this disorder. However, he/she cannot prescribe medications. That said, a teacher can share that the behaviors exhibited by the child are consistent with ADHD and a doctor referral should occur. Diagnosing many illnesses and disorders can be difficult because many disorders mimic each other. Often it is a process of elimination. The [www.healthcentral.com](http://www.healthcentral.com)

website offers these conditions that can mimic ADHD:

1. People with autism can seem to lack the ability to create emotional bonds and can struggle with interactions with others. Children with autism are often over-excited when in high stimulus environments, which can mimic hyperactivity.

Both children with ADHD and children with autism can have a hard time adjusting to change.

**2.** People that suffer from hearing impairments can experience problems in social situations and may have underdeveloped communication. They may have a hard time paying attention because of their inability to hear properly. Undiagnosed hearing loss can appear to be missing details of conversations, not listening or not paying attention. These symptoms are also common in individuals with ADHD.

**3.** Hypothyroidism can create feelings of sadness or depression. People with ADHD can also suffer from these feelings, especially if depression is a co-existing condition.

Hypothyroidism also includes symptoms of inability to concentrate and memory problems. ADHD also includes the symptom inability to concentrate, and forgetfulness can be mistaken for memory loss.

**4.** Iron Deficiency in adults causes lethargy, feeling exhausted and irritability. In infants and children, however, the symptoms include irritability, inability to concentrate, impaired cognitive skills and a short attention span. Children with ADHD also show symptoms of inability to concentrate and are distracted easily, mimicking a short attention span.

**5.** Lead poisoning, even at low levels, can create a number of problems. Some complications of lead toxicity include mental retardation, decreased school performance, short-term memory problems, inability to concentrate and decreased cognitive function. Many of these symptoms are also seen in children with ADHD.

**6.** Mental retardation can appear as emotional immaturity. Some symptoms include limited social skills, school performance issues and needing extra time to learn.

Symptoms of mild mental retardation include forgetfulness and the inability to connect consequences with actions.

**7.** Hypoglycemia, also called low blood sugar, can cause a number of symptoms similar to ADHD including aggression, hyperactivity, and inability to sit still or low concentration levels. In addition, some people also have an adverse reaction to chemicals in food, such as, MSG, red dye, corn syrup or additional additives. These reactions can include anger, agitation, impulsiveness, hyperactivity and lack of concentration.

**8.** Some children with mild seizures can experience "absence seizures" lasting only a few seconds. Sometimes these seizures are not even noticeable. After a seizure there can be a period of several hours where someone feels disoriented and confused, causing difficulty following directions or being attentive.

9. For children with sensory disorder, overstimulation can create symptoms similar to ADHD. They may take risks without understanding the danger, quickly jump from activity to activity, be accident-prone or have difficulty paying attention.

10. Although people with ADHD notoriously have difficulty sleeping, they may or may not have a sleep disorder. The inability to get a good night's sleep interferes with many daytime activities. People that lack sleep can have a hard time concentrating, communicating, following directions, and may suffer decreased short-term memory. People with ADHD may experience many of these symptoms, unrelated to getting a good night's sleep. Visit this link for more information! [http://www.healthcentral.com/adhd/cf/slideshows/10-medical-conditions-that-share-symptoms-with-add-adhd/last\\_slide/](http://www.healthcentral.com/adhd/cf/slideshows/10-medical-conditions-that-share-symptoms-with-add-adhd/last_slide/)

### Symptoms of ADHD include:

Inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity are the key behaviors of ADHD. It is normal for all children to be inattentive, hyperactive, or impulsive sometimes, but for children with ADHD, these behaviors are more severe and occur more often. To be diagnosed with the disorder, a child must have symptoms for 6 or more months and to a degree that is greater than other children of the same age.

Children who have symptoms of **inattention** may:

- Be easily distracted, miss details, forget things, and frequently switch from one activity to another
- Have difficulty focusing on one thing
- Become bored with a task after only a few minutes, unless they are doing something enjoyable

- Have difficulty focusing attention on organizing and completing a task or learning something new
- Have trouble completing or turning in homework assignments, often losing things (e.g., pencils, toys, assignments) needed to complete tasks or activities
- Not seem to listen when spoken to
- Daydream, become easily confused, and move slowly
- Have difficulty processing information as quickly and accurately as others
- Struggle to follow instructions.

Children who have symptoms of **hyperactivity** may:

- Fidget and squirm in their seats
- Talk nonstop
- Dash around, touching or playing with anything and everything in sight
- Have trouble sitting still during dinner, school, and story time
- Be constantly in motion
- Have difficulty doing quiet tasks or activities.

Children who have symptoms of **impulsivity** may:

- Be very impatient
- Blur out inappropriate comments, show their emotions without restraint, and act without regard for consequences
- Have difficulty waiting for things they want or waiting their turns in games
- Often interrupt conversations or others' activities.

### **ADHD Can Be Mistaken for Other Problems**

Parents and teachers can miss the fact that children with symptoms of inattention have the disorder because they are often quiet and less likely to act out. They may sit quietly, seeming to work, but they are often not paying attention to what they are doing. They may get along well with other children, compared with those with the other subtypes, who tend to have social problems. But children with the inattentive kind of ADHD are not the only ones whose disorders can be missed. For example, adults may think that children with the hyperactive and impulsive subtypes just have emotional or disciplinary problems.

Information gathered from the National Institutes of Mental Health website.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder/complete-index.shtml#pub2>

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