

Adult ADHD

Managing Adult ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is not just diagnosed in children; about 4% of US adults also have ADHD. Adults who have ADHD also had ADHD as children and may have gone undiagnosed, or their symptoms may have worsened over time.

ADHD symptoms can manifest in adults that are less obvious than symptoms in children. The core symptoms of ADHD in adults may include restlessness, impulsivity and difficulty paying attention. Adults with ADHD may have a hard time concentrating, remembering directions and information, prioritizing tasks, and completing work in a timely manner. These symptoms can manifest in many ways, including chronic procrastination, poor time management, mood swings, low self-esteem and can even lead to problems at work, school and in relationships.

Managing ADHD

Luckily, there are many ways to manage your ADHD, including medications, counseling, and behavioral strategies.

Medication

Medications can be very helpful to managing ADHD. Medication works to address the core symptoms of adult ADHD while the medication is active. There are different types of medications for ADHD, so it may take several tries before you find the best option for you.

Medications for ADHD can be very expensive. Luckily, many companies offer patient savings programs for name brand medications. These programs help patients save money on prescriptions. When you enroll in these programs, you will receive a code that you will share with your pharmacist. To learn more, you can research patient saving programs specific to your medication on the internet. You can also ask your healthcare provider if they have any patient savings program cards, or ask to try generic medications, which are much more affordable.

Counseling and Psychotherapy

While medication can help manage the core symptoms of ADHD, counseling and psychotherapy, like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) help address difficulties in everyday life. Counseling often provides strategies and skills to assist with things like time management, organization, and planning. Working with a mental health professional can help you create individualized strategies to manage the symptoms of adult ADHD.

Behavioral Strategies for Managing Adult ADHD

Keeping up with work, relationships, controlling clutter and even things like paying bills can seem overwhelming with ADHD. In addition to talking with your healthcare provider about managing ADHD, there are many techniques you can use to feel in control of your life.

These strategies will take some work, and it will be important for you to decide which ones work best for your life. It will take commitment to creating a habit for these strategies to be the most useful, but it will be worthwhile to improve your quality of life.

- **Getting Organized**

Organization at home and at work can be a serious challenge for people with ADHD. Creating an organization strategy that is realistic to implement and keep up with long term can be extremely helpful in managing ADHD. Organized spaces make things easier to find, reduce anxiety, reduce strain on relationships and increase productivity. Here are some tips for getting organized:

- **Start with decluttering.** Reducing clutter will make organizing easier, because you'll have a better idea of what needs to be organized, and what can be tossed.
 - **Tackle the easiest space first.** Starting with the easiest room or space first, you are breaking the large task of organizing into small, manageable chunks.
 - **Get supplies before starting.** Before you start organizing, make sure you have everything you think you'll need.
 - **Designate zones.** Grouping similar items together, or items that correspond with an activity, makes both finding and putting away things much easier.
 - **Have a “landing pad.”** Designating a spot to put daily essentials by the door helps reduce time looking for things like keys, backpacks and wallets.
- **Time Management**

Developing time management skills is essential for managing ADHD. There is more than one way to develop time management skills, and it is important for you to experiment and try what works best for you.

 - **Use a planner.** This can be a pencil-to-paper planner, an app, or a notebook. You should be able to take it with you wherever you go. Write down all your appointments, meetings and other commitments in your planner, and be sure to refer to it each day.
 - **Overestimate how long it will take you to complete something.** Add at least 10 minutes to how long you think it will take you to finish a task.
 - **Get a watch.** And check it! Using a watch and being aware of the clock will help you keep track of time. Using a watch instead of checking your phone will reduce distractions.
 - **Create a Routine.** Making a scheduled routine will help you stay organized, on-time and on-task. Using checklists can also help when creating routines.
 - **Task Management**

Organization isn't just about your physical space. People with ADHD may have a hard time organizing tasks for school and work, too. These strategies will help you organize your work, prioritize, and stay on track.

 - **Make lists.** Each day after you check your planner, make a list of all the tasks for the day. After looking at the entire list, prioritize the tasks accordingly. When prioritizing, consider what task is most important, which tasks are time sensitive, and which tasks can be finished later. Keeping these lists in one notebook or app allows you to refer to previous lists to be sure you don't forget any tasks.
 - **Break down big projects.** Creating smaller tasks out of large projects makes things more manageable so it is easier to get started.
 - **Work in small increments.** Getting started is half of the battle. If you're avoiding something, commit to working on it for 15 minutes to get over the “hump” of getting started. If you feel like you need a break after 15 minutes, set a timer for 5 minutes and commit to starting again immediately after your break.
 - **Don't multi-task.** Staying focused on one thing at a time will increase your overall productivity. Focusing on one task at a time ensures you finish one task 100%, instead of 8 tasks 50%.
 - **Finance Management**

Procrastination, disorganization and impulsivity can make money management an issue for adults with ADHD. Taking a proactive role is key in staying on track.

 - **Set up reminders.** Use your calendar to set reminders when bills and payments are due.
 - **Use online banking.** Online banking gives you immediate access 24/7 to your accounts, reduces paper clutter, and makes bill paying as easy as a click of a button. Online banking apps often have budgeting tools, allowing you to see a breakdown of when, where and how you're spending money over time.
 - **Driving**

Distracted driving is a serious problem for all people but can be particularly dangerous for adults with ADHD. When driving, be aware of how inattentiveness and distractions will affect you. It is very important to reduce all possible distractions, especially cell phones. Texting and driving is illegal in many states and extremely dangerous, so be sure to turn off all notifications before you're on your way.

A combination of counseling, medication management and creating structure in your life can improve your ability to manage your symptoms. Be realistic; this won't change overnight but trying each day will help you build habits and coping strategies. Adult ADHD is a life-long disorder, but it doesn't have to affect the quality of your life.

Additional Resources

Books/Magazines

- [Mastering your Adult ADHD](#)
- [Anxiety and Worry Workbook](#)
- [I Am Here Now](#)
- [ADDitude Magazine](#)
- [Driven to Distraction](#)
- [Organizing Solutions for People with ADHD, 2nd Edition-Revised and Updated: Tips and Tools to Help You Take Charge of Your Life and Get Organized](#)
- [The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing](#)

Apps/Tools/Methods

- [Insight Timer](#) – Free meditation app
- [Pomodoro Technique](#) – This technique uses a timer to break down work into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length, separated by short breaks.
- [Forest](#) – Forest is a popular productivity app that helps people beat their phone addiction and manage their time in an interesting and pleasant way.
- [Stay Focusd](#) -- StayFocusd is a productivity extension for Google Chrome that helps you stay focused on work by restricting the amount of time you can spend on time-wasting websites.
- [Freedom](#) -- Freedom is a productivity platform that blocks digital distractions on all your devices and allows you to focus on what matters most.
- [Weekly Planner: 30-minute Intervals](#) – Plan your week out in 30-minute intervals. Includes a downloadable Word document.
- [Time Management and ADHD: Day Planners](#) – Information and tips for using a day planner, from Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD).

