

HYPERACTIVITY SYMPTOMS IN ADULTS

- **Often fidgets with hands, feet or squirms in seat** – Adults may be seen picking their fingers, shaking their knees, tapping their hands or feet, talking with their hands, changing their position.
- **Often leaves seat in classroom, or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected** – Adults may be restless, i.e., frustrated, with dinners out in restaurants, unable to sit still during conversations. This may also manifest as a strong internal feeling of restlessness when waiting.
- **Often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate (in adolescents or adults, may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness)** - adults may describe their subjective sense of always needing to be on the go or feeling more comfortable with stimulating activities (e.g. skiing) than more sedatory types of recreation. Patients may pace or fidget during the interview, typically carrying a cellular phone that they answer repeatedly
- **Often difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly** – Adults may describe an unwillingness to ever just stay at home or engage in quiet activities. They may complain that they are workaholics, in which case they may give detailed examples.
- **Is “often on the go” or acts as if “driven by a motor”**- Significant others may have a sense of exhausting and frenetic pace these adults require for themselves and seem to expect of others. Holidays may be described as draining, since there is no opportunity to rest.

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- **Often talks excessively** – This talking makes dialogue difficult and often interferes with spouse's sense of “being heard” or having achieved a sense of intimacy. This chatter can be experienced as nervous nagging and may also interfere with appropriate social behaviour at parties. Clowning around, repartee, or other means of dominating conversations may mask a basic inability to engage in give-and-take conversation.

Phone : 011-684-1621
Fax : 011-684-1615
E-mail : jeeva786@rogers.com

www.adhdclinicjeeva.com

Melrose Arch
Centre for Medical Excellence
18 The High Street



ADULT ADHD SYMPTOMS



Dr Shabeer Jeeva
Specialist Psychiatrist



ADULT INATTENTION

- **Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities** - These adults have difficulty remembering where they put things, etc. In work this may lead to costly errors. Tasks that require detail and are tedious (e.g. income tax preparation become very stressful.)
- **Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities** - They have an inability to complete tasks such as tidying a room or mowing the lawn without forgetting the objective and starting something else; inability to sit with boring jobs, inability to sustain sufficient attention to read a book (although there is no reading disorder); inability to keep accounts, write letters, pay bills
- **Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly** – They receive complaints that they do not listen, that it is difficult to get their attention, or that even when they have heard what is said they “forget” and do not follow through. Sometimes these complaints reflect the sense that they have “tuned out”.
- **Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behaviours or failure to understand the instructions)** - They have difficulties following other peoples instructions, an inability to read or follow directions in manuals for appliances, or failure to keep commitments undertaken, such as in the household.

- **Often has difficulty organising tasks or activities** - They note recurrent errors (lateness, missed appointments, and failure to meet critical deadlines). Sometimes a deficit in this area is seen in the degree to which organisational responsibilities have been delegated to others (e.g. the spouse at home or the secretary at work).
- **Often avoids, dislikes or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework)** – They may indefinitely delay responding to mail, preparing taxes, organising old papers, establishing proper insurance or a will, attending to financial arrangements, paying bills. One can inquire about specifics and then ask why particular tasks were not attended to. These adults often complain procrastination.
- **Often loses things necessary for tasks or activities (e.g. toys, school assignments, pencils, books or tools).** - Parents have “lost” their children or “forgotten” them somewhere, women may lose their purses frequently, others may misplace their keys, lose assignments from work, forget where the car is parked.

Is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli – Adults subjectively experience distractibility and describe what manoeuvres are required for them to attend. This may include increasing the amount of “white noise”, multitasking and creating an “emergency” or absolute quite. Children may be seen as distracting and overwhelming, even when their behaviour is within the norm.

- **Is often forgetful in daily activities** – Adults may complain bitterly of “memory” problems. They head out to the supermarket with a list of things to buy, but end up coming home with a bargain, a piece of furniture instead of the milk. Planning is difficult, since information provided about where or when something will happen is forgotten.

IMPULSIVITY SYMPTOMS IN ADULTS

- **Often blurts out or answers before questions have been completed** – This will usually be observed during an interview. This may also be felt by patients as a subjective sense of other peoples talking too slowly and having to wait for them to finish.
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- **Often has difficulty waiting his turn** – Adults find themselves unable to wait for children to finish tasks at their own pace, they may feel irritated waiting in line at bank machines and restaurants. They may be aware of their intense efforts to force themselves to wait. Some adults compensate for this by ensuring that they carry something at all times.
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- **Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g. butt into conversations or games).** – This is most often experienced by adults as social ineptness at cocktail parties or even with close friends. An example might be an inability to watch others struggling with a task (such as trying to open a door with a key) without jumping in to try themselves.

