

# MYTHS & FACTS

## Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



### MYTH

Everyone has ADHD

Only male children have ADHD

Factors like sugar intake and parenting style cause ADHD

ADHD is a superpower

ADHD is not a real condition

People with ADHD should just “try harder”



### FACT

The core symptoms of ADHD can occur in everyone occasionally (e.g. forgetting items). People with ADHD, however, experience significantly greater numbers of these symptoms, with greater frequency and more significant difficulties and impairment.<sup>[2]</sup>

Male patients are four to nine times more likely to be diagnosed in childhood; however, ADHD occurs in people of all sexes and gender identities. Female and gender-diverse individuals are more likely to be diagnosed in adulthood.<sup>[1, 2]</sup>

ADHD is primarily biological and genetic in its origins and the correlation between ADHD and diet has not been proven. Environmental factors such as parenting or nutrition, however, can minimize or intensify the difficulties experienced by individuals with ADHD.<sup>[2]</sup>

While some people consider ADHD a superpower and may prefer to emphasize their strengths, others may view this as invalidating their experience. ADHD can be a strength in certain situations (e.g., hyperfocus). However, to be diagnosed, it must also cause impairment in multiple areas of life.<sup>[3]</sup>

ADHD is a neurobiological condition associated with inattention, hyperactivity and/or impulsivity, along with several related difficulties across various life domains.<sup>[2]</sup>

Individuals with ADHD cannot just “try harder” to overcome their symptoms; neurobiological factors that underlie their symptoms cannot be alleviated through willpower. One way this myth arises is people notice that those with ADHD can focus in certain situations. Just like people without ADHD, those with ADHD often find it easier to focus on topics and activities that are interesting to them. Their difficulty focusing in other areas is frequently <sup>[373]</sup>misunderstood for this reason.

Resources such as this one have been adapted from CADDRA's ADHD and Substance Use Program (CASUP). To learn more about the diagnosis and treatment of co-occurring ADHD and SUD, you can [enroll in CASUP](#), where you will find additional resources not included on ADHD TrEAT.

#### References

1. Castellano-García, Francisca, et al. “Sex Differences in Substance Use, Prevalence, Pharmacological Therapy, and Mental Health in Adolescents with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).” *Brain Sciences* (2076-3425), vol. 12, no. 5, May 2022, p. 590, <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci12050590>
2. CADDRA - Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance: Canadian ADHD Practice Guidelines, 4.1 Edition, Toronto ON; CADDRA, 2020.
3. CADDRA - Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance: ADHD Language Guide. Toronto, ON. CADDRA 2021. [https://www.caddra.ca/wp-content/uploads/Copy-of-ADHD-Language-Guide-Infographic\\_DEC2021\\_CADDRA.pdf](https://www.caddra.ca/wp-content/uploads/Copy-of-ADHD-Language-Guide-Infographic_DEC2021_CADDRA.pdf)