



Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) describes a pattern of inattention or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning. It is a **developmental disorder**, meaning it is present in childhood and usually lasts throughout a person's life. Two categories of symptoms can impact school, work, sport, or social activities:

INATTENTION

- Failure to give attention to detail or making careless mistakes
- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Does not follow instructions and fails to follow through
- Difficulty organizing tasks and activities
- Avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained attention
- Often loses things necessary for activities (i.e. keys, equipment, paperwork, glasses, etc.)
- Easily distracted
- Forgetful in daily activities

HYPERACTIVITY-IMPULSIVITY

- Fidgets with or taps hands or feet or squirms when seated
- Leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected
- Runs about or climbs in situations where it is inappropriate
- Unable to engage in leisure activities quietly
- Unable to be or is uncomfortable being still for extended time
- Talks excessively
- Interrupts others in conversation
- Difficulties waiting for their turn (e.g., while at training or receiving coaching)
- Interrupts or intrudes on others

Depending on the particular symptoms an athlete experiences, ADHD can be specified as **predominantly inattentive presentation**, **predominantly hyperactive/impulsive presentation**, or **combined presentation**.



For adults, ADHD commonly causes problems in **relationships, work, and school** as people struggle to fulfill obligations, stay organized, manage money, exercise regularly, eat well, and maintain relationships. Many people end up lying about or trying to cover up their difficulties, which usually just makes things worse as they don't get the support they need.



HOW COMMON IS ADHD?

ADHD has an estimated worldwide prevalence of about **5% in children** and **2.5% in adults**. ADHD is about twice as common in males as in females. Most experts agree that this is because females with ADHD more commonly present with the **inattentive type**, which tends to be less disruptive in a classroom setting, for example, and are therefore **underdiagnosed** throughout their lifetime. The prevalence of ADHD in student-athletes and high-performance athletes may be around **7-8%**¹. Children with ADHD are often attracted to sports because hyperactivity is accepted in a sports setting, and the movement can provide intrinsic rewards for many with ADHD.

CAUSES AND DIAGNOSIS OF ADHD

Research shows that ADHD has a **biological basis**, and genetics play an important role. **Premature birth** or **low birth weight**, **exposure to lead** or **pesticides** in early childhood, and **brain injuries** may also increase the likelihood of having ADHD. Family and social environment **do not cause ADHD**, but they can **worsen** symptoms or influence how they are expressed.

There is no one test or procedure used to diagnose ADHD. Assessment involves **gathering information from multiple sources** (e.g., parents, teachers, testing) in several settings. Standardized testing can help identify areas where people with ADHD have difficulty. Most people with ADHD are diagnosed in childhood.



TREATMENT STRATEGIES

For most people and athletes, the best treatment for ADHD is a combination of **behaviour therapy and medication**. Recovery is seen as the ongoing management of ADHD symptoms to support living a meaningful life in line with goals and values. **Consult with a physician** if you are interested in medication for ADHD. *Remember: many medications require a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) for use in training and competition.*

TIPS FOR MANAGING ADHD

- 1 **Use a planner or agenda** to track appointments and schedule activities.
- 2 **Use rewards** to reinforce desired behaviours and build good habits.
- 3 **Utilize the self-help strategies** available from national or provincial/territorial bodies to change the way you think, build your attention skills, and structure your environment and routines for success.
- 4 **Attend a Game Plan Session on ADHD as Your Superpower.**



CONTACT YOUR COPSIN GAME PLAN ADVISOR OR MENTAL HEALTH LEAD FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ADHD AND TO GET CONNECTED TO THE RIGHT RESOURCES.