

ADHD Factsheet

Congratulations on achieving a provisional diagnosis of Adult ADHD from Dr Saibal Guha. These are some important facts you need to be aware of for diagnosis and management of this neuro-developmental condition, which has a high success rate for management. Your life may be considerably different if you follow these aspects of your treatment and seek regular reviews with Dr Guha or another professional who is aware of this disorder and its' treatment aspects.

Here are some facts for your information:

ADHD in Adults – Facts:

In adults, ADHD is a much more elaborate disorder than in children, and often, the problem is related to controlling impulses and developing self-regulation. This self-control impairment affects an adults' ability not just to perform tasks, but also to determine when they need to be done. Furthermore, the manifestation of hyperactivity simply changes with adolescence and adulthood, becoming a more generalised restlessness, with a tendency to fidget. ADHD also has negative consequences for the development of adequate confidence and self esteem. Teachers and parents may make incorrect assumptions about the behaviour and attitude of a child with ADHD and may provide them with frequent and erroneous negative feedback. Rejection and frustration are commonly reported. The more intelligent inattentive children may realise on some level they are somehow different internally from their peers. However, they are also more likely to accept and internalise continuous negative feedback, creating a negative self image which becomes self reinforcing. If these children progress into adulthood untreated, their inattentiveness, ongoing frustrations, and poor self-image frequently create numerous and severe problems in maintaining healthy relationships, succeeding in secondary schooling or studies, or succeeding in their career.

These problems can compound frustrations and low self-esteem, and will often lead to development of associated disorders, such as anxiety and Depression. Personality vulnerabilities, such as emotionally unstable personality, is a common finding in adults with unmanaged ADHD, which can potentially create problems with coping mechanisms to stress.

There are a few neuroscientific backgrounds to Adult ADHD. Over the last few years, the theory of ADHD as a disorder of executive functioning has been increasingly well substantiated. Executive functioning is described as being able to generate adequate problem solving ability to achieve a future goal. Planning, working memory, fluency, set shifting (the ability to switch from one action to another), are all significantly impaired in individuals with ADHD. As a result, people with ADHD present with difficulties organising their daily life, filtering information, keeping finances and work load under control, becoming easily frustrated and overwhelmed. Inattention has a profound impact on the ability to manage time and follow instructions, and a lack of organisation of thought and distractibility can impair communication. Tasks which require concentration and motivation are affected by ADHD, for example, starting a task and completing it, and staying focused throughout a task.

Interestingly enough, even though high intelligence is generally an advantage, it may pose significant challenges during the diagnostic process. Other people may feel there is no dysfunctioning in the patients' life because they perform better than average. However, this does not always mean patients perform at their intelligence level. Often because they are forced to function below their level, they become exhausted, overwhelmed and emotionally drained, spending too much time to deliver their work. Therefore, they end up feeling frustrated, labelling themselves as "underachievers".

Medications to treat ADHD:

In light of the diagnosis of Adult ADHD and the significant impairment associated with it, you may likely benefit from treatment, which include medications. Stimulant medications work in different ways and usually affect Dopamine and Nor-Adrenaline regulation in different regions of the brain, providing alleviation to a range of inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive symptoms. In case you decide to try medication, Dr Guha usually would recommend commencing you on Methylphenidate (Ritalin), which is recommended as first line treatment for adults with ADHD by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and RANZCP.

Dr Guha recommends starting with a low dose of 10mg BD in an immediate release preparation. The dose should be titrated according to side effects and response over a four to six week period to a maximum of 30-40mg/day. A low dose of medication for Adult ADHD works quite well if you are willing to consider other psychological and lifestyle measures in

addition to medications.

Methylphenidate has longer acting preparations which you may wish to discuss at length with Dr Guha during your future consults.

Other medications which are frequently used are:

- Dexamphetamine (short-acting) and Lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse)
- Atomoxetine (Strattera)
- Guanfacine (Intuniv)
- Bupropion and Clonidine (not regularly used)

If starting on any above medications, Dr Guha advises the following:

- Measure baseline weight, blood pressure and pulse
- Check blood pressure and pulse before and after any dose changes
- Perform these checks every three months, and measure weight every six months

Usually, your GP will be able to help you with these aspects.

In adults, all stimulant medications are treated as a Schedule 8 drug and are regularly monitored by MMU, Qld. Dr Guha may have discussed with you the side effects of the medication you have commenced. Details of this medication and the side effect profile is available through the pharmacy you are collecting your medications from. You should read the patient information leaflet which is provided with the medication, which contains advice specific to the brand which is being dispensed for you.

Once commenced on medication, MMU recommends review by a suitably trained Specialist regularly, or if being prescribed by your GP, to be reviewed at least once in two years by a Specialist. Dr Guha would be more than happy to offer such follow-up, either once maintained on medication or during the titration phase, subject to this being agreed to by you and Dr Guha. If we manage you at MARSAL Clinic, we will periodically liaise with your GP through letters. You must review at least once in six months with Dr Guha to keep you active in our system. Dr Guha usually discharges clients who have not reviewed with him for over six months.

Please ask your GP to forward the results of a recent physical health check (relevant blood tests and UDS, if required) including blood pressure, pulse and weight to Dr Guha. He will need this before he can start treatment after your initial consult. Dr Guha usually sends a detailed letter within 48 hours to your GP after your initial assessment seeking these aspects. You will also need a baseline ECG which is usually sourced from your GP practice.

It is advisable you may require regular reviews with your GP to monitor blood pressure and pulse during the initiation period on a two weekly basis, or as required.

An important aspect to remember: You cannot use any illicit drugs during this treatment period. The use of illicit drugs (in any form), will sabotage your improvement and have the potential to derail your mental health. Psychosis and mood disorders usually are the consequent of concomitant illicit substance use. Periodic UDS may be requested by Dr Guha to ensure you are not abusing/using illicit substances. Dr Guha has a duty of care to you, and he cannot prescribe stimulant medications if you are on any illicit substances. This is laid down by the regulations of MMU, which guide and monitor all stimulant prescribing aspects in Qld.

Other recommendations:

Lifestyle:

With all individuals with ADHD, Dr Guha always stresses the value of a healthy lifestyle. He may have already discussed with you general lifestyle recommendations and suggestions regarding modifications for diet and eating habits. If not, this factsheet will be a general guide for you.

- Dr Guha strongly encourages you to exercise due to preliminary research findings suggesting that *physical exercise* is likely to increase motivation to perform cognitive tasks, reduce confusion and improve mood levels in adults with ADHD.
- He also strongly emphasizes the importance of eliminating *all illicit drug and alcohol use* to optimise response to medication and avoid further problems.
- There are many benefits of a diet based on food with low glycemic index and the advantage of having a large breakfast based on proteins, according to the following recommendations: Reduce simple carbohydrates such as

sweets, sugar, products made from white flour, white rice and potatoes without skins. Reduce processed foods such as packed snacks. Increase complex carbohydrates, such as vegetables and some fruits (including oranges, tangerines, pears, grapefruit, apples and kiwi), unprocessed cereals and legumes. If you are not vegetarian or vegan, try reducing meat consumption (in particular supermarket, intensively farmed animals), and divert your protein intake to legumes and meat free foods. Prefer extra-virgin olive oil to other kinds of oil, butter or margarine. If you like, eat fermented food containing "good" bacteria for your intestine; avoid processed, packed cheese.

Drink about two litres of still water daily (if other specific fluid intake plans have not been suggested by your GP or Specialist Doctor). Avoid fizzy or sugary drinks, included not home made fruit juices.

Eat more Omega-3 fatty acids, such as those found in tuna, salmon, other cold water white fish, walnuts, and olive oil.

A good source of information about healthy living can be found at <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx>.

Psychotherapy:

You may find it useful to implement coping skills through meditation and mindfulness. MindHead, Calm, Mindfi, Stop, Breathe and Think, Aura, Smiling Mind, Buddhify, are just some of the many mobile applications available online to support with meditation and daily mindfulness practices. More information about mindfulness can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

CBT and ADHD coaching are very important aspects of ADHD treatment. Dr Guha usually recommends coaching in addition to other lifestyle modification aspects. He usually refers his clients to ConnectADHD based in Brisbane. More details are available at <http://www.connectadhd.com/>

Psychoeducation about ADHD:

You may wish to increase your awareness and knowledge of Adult ADHD. Some book recommendations for further reading:

"Delivered from Distraction: Getting the Most Out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder" by John J Ratey.

"Taking Charge of Adult ADHD" by Russell A Barkley

"The Adult ADHD Tool Kit" by Russell J Ramsey

Additional good sources of information can be found at:

<http://rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/problems/adhdinadults.aspx>

Additionally, Dr Guha usually recommends reading "Reinventing Your Life" by Jeffrey E Young, the founder of Schema Therapy. The book explains simply the basic aspects of Schema Therapy and the negative thoughts or "life traps" which reinforce negative patterns in our everyday life. This helps clients with personality vulnerabilities, as comorbid to their ADHD.

A good resource for individuals with ADHD and their families is this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r3XWj269q>

Dr Guha reiterates the importance of a **multimodal treatment approach**, such as pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy. As well as psychopharmacological measures, best practice treatment of ADHD in adults include psychological intervention carried out by a Clinician experienced in working with this client group. Whilst medication for ADHD seems to work in a "bottom up" fashion by intervening at the neurochemical level in the brain, thereby improving executive functioning and controlling symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsivity, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy works in a "top-down" fashion, by helping patients become more aware of the behavioural and psychological effects of ADHD. Thus specialist **CBT and ADHD Coaching** which is specifically adopted for ADHD, enables individuals to develop and implement strategies to change their chronic maladaptive behavioural patterns and improve their overall well-being.

We at MARSAL Clinic thank you for being with us on your journey to become the individual you wish to be. We hope this fact sheet is helpful.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss aspects of your issues further.