



ADHD IN OLDER ADULTS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



When we think of ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) most of us picture kids who are bouncing off the walls or can't sit still in school. But many older adults also live with ADHD. It doesn't disappear with age. Many people may not even realize they have ADHD. And too often, it gets confused with just "getting older" or even early dementia.

Let's explore what ADHD looks like in older adults, and why it's important to get the right diagnosis and support.

Spotting the Signs of ADHD Later in Life



Forgetfulness



Trouble staying focused



Difficulty finishing tasks

If these experiences sound familiar, you're not alone.
These are common symptoms of ADHD in older adults.

See the next page for more.

For many people, retirement, a change in lifestyle, or chronic illness removes the routines that helped keep them on track for years. Without that structure, ADHD symptoms may feel more noticeable. But unlike age-related memory loss, ADHD symptoms usually start much earlier in life, even if you didn't know it at the time.

A recent review of studies found that many older adults either have a diagnosis of ADHD or fit the criteria, even if they've never been officially diagnosed. That means there are likely lots of people out there struggling silently.

Challenges in Diagnosis

Here's the tricky part: the symptoms of ADHD can look a lot like other issues that happen with aging, like mild memory problems or even depression. As a result, ADHD often goes undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

Harvard Health argues that doctors might not be thinking about ADHD when evaluating older patients. That's starting to change, but slowly. Family history can be a helpful clue since ADHD often runs in families. There are also screening tools that can help, but a full evaluation by a professional is the best way to know for sure.

Another challenge? Most of the tools used to diagnose ADHD were designed for kids. They're not always a good fit for older adults, which means the condition can fly under the radar for years.

What Can Be Done to Help?

The good news is: there are treatments that can make life easier if you're living with ADHD.

Some people benefit from medications like stimulants, which are commonly used to treat ADHD. But for older adults, these meds can sometimes affect the heart, so it's important to work closely with your doctor if you're considering them.

Therapy, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and group therapy can also help. It focuses on building routines, improving time management, and learning ways to stay on track. More research is still needed to figure out what works best for older adults, but many people find relief with the right support.



Why It Matters

Understanding ADHD in older adults is important all year, not just during ADHD Awareness Month. It helps avoid the frustration and confusion that come with being misdiagnosed. And with the right tools and support, many people are able to manage their symptoms and enjoy a better quality of life.

If you, or someone you care about, have trouble staying focused, forget appointments often, or struggle to finish everyday tasks, it's worth bringing up with a doctor. ADHD doesn't just affect kids. And you're never too old to get the answers and help you deserve.

WE CAN HELP.

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

Call us today at