

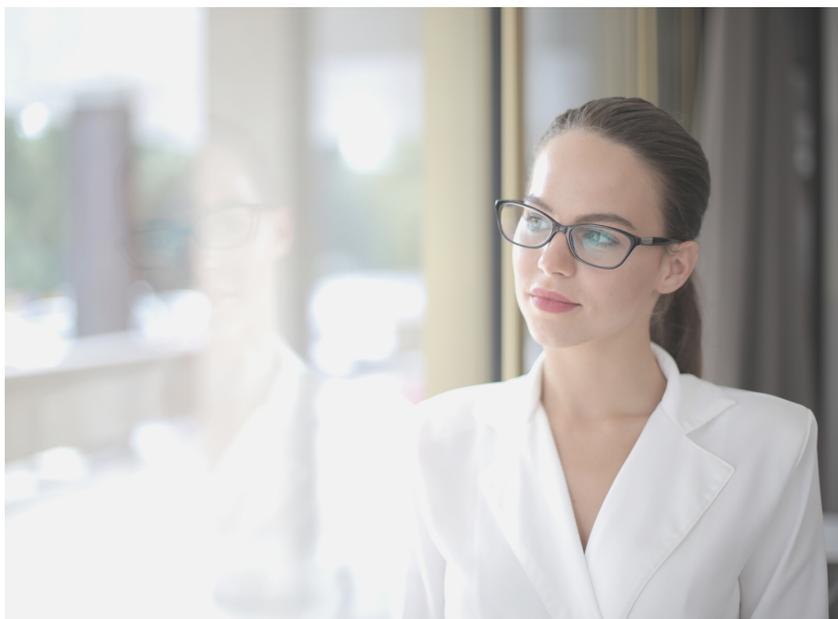
# ADHD EDUCATION

ADHD FOCUS >

## CONTINUITY OF ADHD TREATMENT INTO ADULTHOOD

**A**ttention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is often thought of as a disorder of childhood. Although it is certainly more prevalent in children, the symptoms persist into adulthood in 60 - 70% of patients **(1)**. It has been estimated that between 2.5 - 4.3% of adults suffer from ADHD **(2)**. Unfortunately, this persistence of symptoms is not matched by a continuation of appropriate treatment. Many adolescents have poor medication adherence and some stop taking medication altogether **(3,4)**. This can lead to poor levels of functioning and emotional distress.

Late adolescence is a phase of life that typically involves multiple major adjustments, such as leaving school, moving out of the familiar home environment, starting at a new workplace or institution and the assumption of more responsibility. A young person with ADHD may find this a particularly challenging time and may lack the coping skills to make a smooth adjustment. Many patients experience difficulties in transitioning from a child mental health care provider (HCP) to an adult mental HCP **(5)**. One of the potential barriers that has been identified is failure to develop a transition plan. It is important that adolescents with ADHD, as well as their families, are aware of the possibility that symptoms may continue into adulthood. This awareness will allow for appropriate discussions between families, patients and their doctors. The child mental HCP should be involved in the planning process.



A GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PATIENT, FAMILY AND DOCTOR IS AN IMPORTANT PREDICTOR OF GOOD MEDICATION ADHERENCE.

Encouragement of good adherence to medication during adolescence can assist with developing good habits<sup>3</sup>. A good relationship between the patient, the family and the doctor is an important predictor of good medication adherence. Adolescents may have specific factors which make their adherence to medication more of a challenge **(3)**:

- **Lack of insight into their own functioning and responsibility**
- **Poor decision-making**
- **Perceived stigma from peers**
- **Poor organisational skills**

The goal should be to identify and address issues such as these early on as effectively as possible. Speak to your doctor about management options such as motivational interviewing (which aims to develop a sense of responsibility in the individual) or mindfulness-based training **(3,6,7)**.

The implications of persistent ADHD on adult life are significant. Adults with the disorder are more likely to develop substance abuse problems **(8)**, other mental health conditions **(9)** and have poor job performance **(10)**. It warrants trying to anticipate issues and assist in the transition as much as possible. The foundation of a successful transition to treatment of adult ADHD is to have a proactive approach, while attempting to overcome the many difficulties that adolescence brings.

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[SOURCES >](#)

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