

Prevalence of ADHD in girls

When children with ADHD are studied, the ratio of boys: girls is anywhere from 2:1 to 9:1¹. However, when adults with ADHD are studied, there are similar numbers of women as men¹. This strongly suggests that **girls with ADHD are being missed** and are not having their condition identified.

ADHD – where are the girls?

One possible explanation is that girls may be missed because of the ‘type’ of ADHD that they have. It is known that **females are more prone to predominantly inattentive ADHD (dreamy type)** whereas males are more likely to have combined ADHD or predominantly hyperactive/impulsive ADHD¹.

The symptoms of inattentive ADHD are much less disruptive than those of hyperactive/impulsive ADHD². Therefore, teachers and parents may be less likely to view this behaviour as a ‘problem’ that needs external help or

recognise it in the classroom. A study of primary school teachers found that they frequently did not identify inattentive ADHD type and were not aware that medication could be helpful in this context³.

Where have the girls gone?

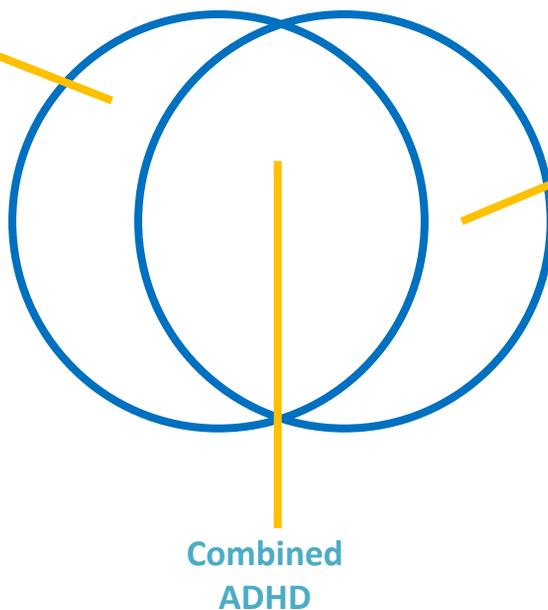
ADHD in girls is associated with lower educational achievement, unplanned pregnancy, mental health conditions and self-harm⁴. Thus, **girls with ADHD are at risk of long-term cumulative adversity**.

Intervention for ‘inattentive ADHD’ has been demonstrated to reduce symptoms and improve social and organisational skills⁵. This may prevent or reduce some of the negative outcomes associated with ‘inattentive ADHD’. However, unless girls are identified (and identified early) this can’t happen.

Teacher training is essential for this to occur.

Inattentive ADHD

- Overlooks or misses details.
- Makes careless mistakes.
- Difficulty remaining focused.
- Often doesn’t appear to listen, even when spoken to directly.
- Easily side-tracked; easily loses focus.
- Difficulty organising tasks and activities.
- Avoids tasks that require sustained mental effort.
- Often loses things.
- Easily distracted, e.g. by noise, thoughts.
- Often forgetful.



Hyperactive/impulsive ADHD

- Often fidgets.
- Feels restless.
- Often “on the go”; unable to be or uncomfortable being still for extended time.
- Often talks excessively.
- Difficulty waiting for turn in conversations and e.g. when waiting in line.
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others, e.g. butts into conversations or activities.

References

- 1) Nussbaum N (2012) ADHD and female specific concerns: A review of the literature and clinical implications. *Journal of Attention Disorders*. **16**(2), 87-100.
- 2) American Psychiatric Association (2013) *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th edition). American Psychiatric Association: Washington, DC, USA.
- 3) Moldavsky M et al. (2014) Primary school teachers’ attitudes about children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and the role of pharmacological treatment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. **19**(2), 202-216.
- 4) Owens EB et al. (2017) Girls with childhood ADHD as adults: cross-domain outcomes by diagnostic persistence. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. **85**(7), 723-736.
- 5) Pfiffner LJ et al. (2007) A randomized, controlled trial of integrated home-school behavioural treatment for ADHD, predominantly inattentive type. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. **46**(8), 1041-1050.

References

- 1) Nussbaum N (2012) ADHD and female specific concerns: A review of the literature and clinical implications. *Journal of Attention Disorders*. **16(2)**, 87-100.
- 2) American Psychiatric Association (2013) *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th edition). American Psychiatric Association: Washington, DC, USA.
- 3) Moldavsky M *et al.* (2014) Primary school teachers' attitudes about children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and the role of pharmacological treatment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. **19(2)**, 202-216.
- 4) Owens EB *et al.* (2017) Girls with childhood ADHD as adults: cross-domain outcomes by diagnostic persistence. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. **85(7)**, 723-736.
- 5) Pfiffner LJ *et al.* (2007) A randomized, controlled trial of integrated home-school behavioural treatment for ADHD, predominantly inattentive type. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. **46(8)**, 1041-1050.