



Over the last 20 years, we have learned a lot about ADHD. As it turns out, many things that doctors and the general public used to believe about ADHD are not true.

Myth: Children outgrow ADHD

In most cases, children do not outgrow ADHD. ADHD is usually first observed in early childhood. Between 60% and 80% of children who are diagnosed with ADHD will still have symptoms when they are teens or adults, although their symptoms may become less obvious over time. By the time a child reaches his teen years, the hyperactivity may be gone but the inattention usually remains.

Myth: ADHD is a new disorder caused by the demands of modern society

ADHD is not a new disorder. In fact, ADHD was first described in the mid-1800s by Dr. Heinrich Hoffman, a German physician who

wrote children's books. His fictional characters were loosely based on actual patients from his clinic. Two of them illustrated the same symptoms of ADHD that are described today:

"Zappel-Philipp" or "Fidgety Phil" showed hyperactive/impulsive symptoms.

"Hans Guck-in-die-Luft" or "Johnny Head-in-the-Air" showed inattention symptoms.

Medical science first documented children exhibiting inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity in 1902. Since then, ADHD has been given many different names by specialists, including "minimal brain dysfunction," "hyperkinetic disorder," and "attention deficit disorder," but the symptoms and problems have not changed.

Myth: Watching too much TV causes ADHD

Increased "screen time," time spent watching television or playing video games, has been linked to inactivity, poor nutrition, and obesity. However, there is no strong evidence so far that watching a lot of television causes ADHD.

One study, published in 2004, found a link between increased TV viewing and attention problems. However, other researchers have questioned these findings. They point out that children with inattention are often able to watch TV for longer than they can stick with other activities. In other words, increased TV viewing could be the result of inattention, rather than the

cause. Other studies have found no relationship between TV viewing and ADHD.

Myth: Junk food and sugar cause ADHD

There is no scientific evidence to prove that eating sugar or junk food will cause ADHD. Recent evidence does show that food additives are associated with higher activity levels. However, this behaviour occurs in all children and does not indicate a true "cause" of ADHD.

There is little scientific evidence to show that dietary changes help with ADHD symptoms or academic functioning.

Myth: Too many children are diagnosed with ADHD

The seeming explosion of ADHD diagnoses and prescriptions for treatment in recent years has led to accusations that doctors, teachers, and parents are labelling ordinary, energetic children with a disease and medicating them to control normal but unwelcome behaviour.

As with almost any condition, some children who do not actually have ADHD are

occasionally misdiagnosed. However, many studies in many different countries have shown that on average, ADHD affects 5% of school-aged children around the world, or about one in every 20 children. ADHD is very common.

There are a number of reasons for the rise in ADHD diagnosis and treatment:

Doctors and the public are now much more aware of ADHD, so more children whose symptoms might have been overlooked in the past are now diagnosed with ADHD. Doctors are also more aware now that ADHD occurs in girls.

Because we are now more aware that ADHD persists through adolescence and into adulthood, children often continue to be treated for longer and so there has been an increase in prescriptions for ADHD treatment.

Medical advances mean that children who were born prematurely or with very low birth weight are now more likely to survive, but they may later have ADHD and/or learning difficulties.