

# Attention Disorders FAQ

## ATTENTION DISORDERS: QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED BY COLLEGE STUDENTS

### **What is Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder?**

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurological condition that affects learning and behavior. The actual prevalence of ADHD is unknown, as studies vary in regards to the rates reported. Symptoms experienced by individuals with ADHD tend to change through their lifespan. Some children and adults with ADHD report inattentive symptoms, some report symptoms of hyperactivity, and some report a combination of inattentive and hyperactive symptoms. A child with ADHD may have problems getting out of their seat at school without asking permission, may get in trouble for talking too much frequently, or may lose worksheets, pencils, and books. Adults with ADHD may experience problems with tardiness, impatience, and disorganization. Symptoms of hyperactivity are likely to decrease in adolescence. Mood swings and difficulty sleeping are especially common in college students with ADHD. These are generalizations, as each person with ADHD will experience the disorder differently.

### **If I wasn't diagnosed as a child, can I be diagnosed in college?**

Children who are diagnosed with ADHD are often identified by parents and teachers and referred for assessment because of overt behavioral problems. They may also be identified if they are doing poorly academically or socially. Children who are not perceived by teachers and parents as disruptive are less likely to be referred for psychological services. Children who are academically and socially successful are also less likely to be identified because they are perceived as doing well. In this case, they have adapted to their disorder. For instance, college students may choose academic paths that downplay attention difficulties.

### **I have the symptoms. Am I ADHD?**

Most college students report difficulties with concentration at one time or another. A large number of medical and psychiatric conditions cause problems with attention and concentration. Anxiety and depression are common conditions that cause concentration problems. However, ADHD that is left untreated may also produce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Disordered eating, sleep disturbances, and substance abuse frequently cause symptoms of inattention. Interpersonal relationships and family conflict are especially common sources of inattention for college students.

### **What can I do if I think I have ADHD?**

You first must be sure that your symptoms of ADHD are not secondary to depression or anxiety. Thus, it is crucial that you see a professional trained in ADHD who has worked with college students. A misdiagnosis may result in an exacerbation of inattentive symptoms and will only make matters worse. The DMC offers a screening process that will assist students in seeking the appropriate services on or off of campus to address attention problems. To make a screening appointment, come in to the DMC Special Services Department in the Harvin Student Center, Room 188.

### **How is ADHD treated?**

If you are diagnosed with ADHD, there are a variety of ways in which you can reduce the severity of symptoms. Medication is frequently recommended. However, modifying organizational and study behaviors, participating in counseling or support groups, and seeking accommodations through the University can also be helpful. Because students with ADHD often experience interpersonal difficulties outside of school, participation in therapy is strongly encouraged.