

# Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder

An illustration of a person with dark hair, wearing a purple long-sleeved shirt and blue pants, running towards the right. They are surrounded by several interlocking gears of different sizes and colors (green, orange, and white). The background is a light purple gradient.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a condition that affects how individuals focus, regulate their impulses, and manage their energy levels. It usually begins in childhood and can continue to affect a person's life through adolescence and into adulthood. AD/HD can manifest in various settings, such as home, in school and at work, impacting the individuals' daily functioning.

**Individuals with AD/HD may have the following conditions:**

## **Inattention**

- Experience careless mistakes in academic or work tasks
- Experience forgetfulness in daily activities
- Feel distracted by surroundings or wandering thoughts easily
- Misplace items and has difficulty organizing belongings frequently
- Struggle to maintain focus during lectures, conversations, or activities

## **Hyperactivity and impulsivity**

- Experience restlessness or moves around in inappropriate situations
- Feel a constant urge to be active, as if driven by an internal motor
- Have difficulty remaining seated during necessary activities
- Tend to talk excessively or struggle to inhibit the impulse to blurt out responses

It is common for individuals with AD/HD to experience co-occurring mental health challenges, such as conduct disorder, mood regulation difficulties and communication difficulties.

It is a common misconception that individuals with AD/HD intentionally exhibit their symptoms; however, it is important to recognize that they often experience significant distress because of these challenges, which are not a matter of choice, but rather reflect neurological differences that can make everyday tasks and interactions more demanding. Understanding this can foster greater empathy and support for their experiences.

# Diagnosis and Treatment



In Hong Kong, healthcare professionals, including psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and educational psychologists, play a key role in diagnosing AD/HD. With appropriate support and intervention, one can experience significant improvements in symptom management, distress relief and overall well-being.

Approaches to support people with AD/HD typically involve medication, skills training and psychological intervention. When appropriate, psychiatrists may prescribe medications to assist the individual enhance focus, reduce hyperactive and impulsive behaviors. With skills training, one may gain more understanding of the impact of AD/HD, learn practical strategies (such as communication and conflict resolution skills) to manage daily activities and regulate emotions.



## Supporting Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

University life can present unique challenges for individuals with AD/HD, particularly in social communications, academic performance, and emotion well-being. Helpful tips may include:

### Social Communication

- ✓ Invite students to notice their communication patterns and the areas which they struggle with, such as interrupting others, difficulty maintaining in the conversation
- ✓ Keep the conversation short and concise, allow students to have breaks when distracted to regain focus
- ✓ Understand students' triggers and specific needs. Provide an environment or aids that would facilitate concentration, such as a quiet location, use of visual aids or nonverbal cues, giving gentle prompts or reminders when they digress or are distracted

### Academic Support

- ✓ Allow early access to course materials and assignment details for preparation
- ✓ Allow extended time in examinations (with professional's recommendation)
- ✓ Assist to break down tasks into smaller, manageable steps
- ✓ Offer direct and concise instructions
- ✓ Offer prompts for students to stay focused in examinations
- ✓ Offer structured lesson plans with clear guidelines
- ✓ Provide access to lecture recordings to facilitate revision/learning after classes
- ✓ Provide a quiet, distraction-free environment for examinations
- ✓ Provide flexibility in assignment due dates

### Psychological Support

- ✓ Refer to psychological counseling service for students' mental health and adversity coping capability

It is essential to recognize that individuals with AD/HD have unique strengths and capacity. Fostering an inclusive and supportive environment can empower students to pursue their goals with confidence and resources they need.

