



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Adult ADHD and Brain Health and Performance

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is not exclusive to children and young adults. Today, we explore adult ADHD, the challenges it presents, and how it can be treated.***

When you're an adult with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), you might have difficulty paying attention, behave erratically, or feel restless and unmotivated. Life can come at you fast. Unpaid bills may pile up, project deadlines might whiz past you, and your most important relationships can deteriorate.

ADHD, a brain disorder characterized by continuing difficulty paying attention, restlessness, and impulsive behavior, is commonly considered a condition that affects only children. But many adults suffer through the symptoms as well. Unfortunately for adults with ADHD, there is rarely a teacher, parent, or other authority figure around to keep them on task or get them the help they need.

ADHD affects about 8.4 percent of children and 2.5 percent of adults, according to the American Psychiatric Association. Experts estimate that about 60 percent of cases of childhood ADHD persist into adulthood.

Symptoms may include:

- Impulsiveness
- Problems prioritizing tasks
- Disorganization
- Difficulty focusing
- Poor time management
- Restlessness
- Trouble multitasking
- Low tolerance with frustration

- Short temper
- Mood swings
- Difficulty dealing with stress

Many of the symptoms of ADHD in adults and children have been attributed to dysfunction in the brain’s prefrontal cortex (PFC), which regulates thoughts, actions, and emotions. The PFC also permits focus of attention on one task and the shifting of focus to something else. The neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine are key to allow the transfer of information between neurons in the prefrontal cortex and other parts of the brain. When these neurotransmitters are deactivated too quickly, there is a deficit in the brain.

That is why medications used to treat ADHD raise the levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain. Two common stimulant drugs are methylphenidate (Concerta, Ritalin) and amphetamines (Adderall). Those with less-severe ADHD symptoms may respond better to brain training, neurofeedback, or cognitive behavioral therapy.

If you and someone you know have several of these symptoms, get a referral from your primary care doctor to a psychologist, psychiatrist, or neurologist for a proper diagnosis.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Are you struggling with symptoms of ADHD, finding it difficult to stay focused on a task, or pay attention for long periods? The BHI offers these strategies for maneuvering through life with ADHD.

- **MARK IT DOWN.** To stay organized, make lists with a pen and paper or use smartphone apps to set reminders. Keep the lists or smartphone near you.
- **CLEAR OUT THE CLUTTER.** Create an appealing work and living environment and keep important materials easily accessible.
- **BLOCK OUT DISTRACTIONS.** Move your workstation to a quiet place that doesn’t face a window or offer other possible distractions.
- **DON’T WAIT.** Deal with immediate tasks, such as emails and phone calls, immediately. Don’t let things pile up and overwhelm you.
- **WATCH THE CLOCK.** Be aware of time by checking a clock or watch on a regular basis. This will prevent you from spending too much time on a single task.
- **TAKE IT ONE AT A TIME.** Multi-tasking is a recipe for distraction for those with ADHD. Finish one task before moving on to the next.
- **KNOW YOUR LIMITS.** Be realistic about what you can do in the time you have. Don’t be afraid to say no to new commitments or projects.
- **GET HELP IF YOU NEED IT.** ADHD coaches who are licensed mental health professionals can offer more tips and tools.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).