**What is ADHD?**

**ADHD stands for ‘Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder’ but that isn’t a great name as it doesn’t accurately describe the symptoms. ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder, which means that there are differences in the brains of people with ADHD when compared to a ‘typical’ brain. No one knows exactly why this happens, but ADHD is highly genetic, and it is thought to affect between 2-5% of all adults.**

**Some evidence suggests that ADHD brains may be on average around 5% smaller than non-ADHD brains, but this is controversial. ADHD brains seem to have a deficit in the action of chemicals which pass signals from nerve to nerve, chemicals called dopamine and noradrenaline. This leads to less activity and connectivity in and between brain areas.**

**ADHD is a lifelong disorder that differs between people who have the disorder. Symptoms may includes an inability to choose what to focus on and for how long, feelings of mental or physical hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour. These factors can affect people with ADHD, either alone or in combination.**

**Attention problems can include**

* **Being easily distracted**
* **Having difficulty planning or organising tasks,**
* **Starting new tasks or hobbies with lots of enthusiasm, but rarely finishing them.**
* **Being daydreamy and forgetful and procrastinating**

**Hyperactivity can present in the following ways:**

* **Inner restlessness, or agitation**
* **Difficulty relaxing**
* **Fidgeting**
* **Talking too much and too loudly**

**Impulsiveness, which diagnostically is included with hyperactivity, often presents in the following ways:**

* **Being impatient**
* **Acting without thinking**
* **Interrupting conversations or finishing other people’s sentences**
* **Making impulsive purchases**
* **Gambling or substance abuse**
* **Entering or breaking off jobs or relationships frequently**

**There are three ‘presentations’ of ADHD, based on these symptoms. The most common form is ‘combined type ADHD’, accounting for around 2/3 of all cases in adults. This presentation includes issues with both attention and hyperactivity or impulsivity.**

**Secondly, we have ‘predominantly inattentive type ADHD’. This presentation is more specifically associated with trouble paying attention, an inability to focus on unrewarding tasks, and making careless mistakes. Around 30% of adults with ADHD are predominantly inattentive. This sometimes gets called ADD, but medically, it is now considered a type of ADHD.**

**Finally, we have predominantly hyperactive/impulsive type ADHD. Adults with this subtype don’t have strong issues with attention, but are often internally hyperactive or restless, and act impulsively. This is the least common presentation of ADHD, accounting for less than 10% of adult ADHD cases.**