

ADHD and 'Co-existing Conditions'



Key Points

- **ADHD is often associated with other psychiatric conditions, known as co-existing disorders.**
- **ADHD is also often associated with the traits of other neurodevelopmental disorders or conditions.**
- **ADHD is also sometimes associated with physical health conditions, known as co-existing conditions.**
- **ADHD is not always found with co-existing conditions.**

ADHD and Mental Health Conditions

ADHD is often associated with other psychiatric conditions, known as co-existing disorders. The most common co-existing disorders in adults with ADHD are:

- **Mood disorders:** depression and bipolar disorder are two mood disorders that are commonly co-occurring with ADHD. Depression is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and worthlessness. Bipolar disorder is characterised by episodes of mania, which is a period of abnormally elevated mood, energy, and activity, and depression.
- **Anxiety disorders:** anxiety disorders are also common in people with ADHD. Anxiety disorders include generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and panic disorder amongst others.
- **Eating disorders:** eating disorders are serious mental illnesses that can have a devastating impact on a person's physical and emotional health. They are characterized by an unhealthy relationship with food, body weight, and body image. They include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder.
- **Addiction:** addiction is a chronic, relapsing mental health issue that is characterised by compulsive seeking and use/engagement with a substance or activity, despite harmful consequences.
- Here are some of the signs and symptoms of addiction:

The relative risk of a co-existing mental health disorder occurring in someone with ADHD varies depending on the disorder. For example, the relative risk of

depression occurring in someone with ADHD is 2 to 8 times higher than in the general population. The relative risk of bipolar disorder occurring in someone with ADHD is 3 to 10 times higher than in the general population. The relative risk of anxiety disorders occurring in someone with ADHD is 2 to 5 times higher than in the general population.

It is important to note that not everyone with ADHD will have a co-existing mental health disorder. However, the risk of a co-existing mental health disorder is higher in people with ADHD than in the general population.

ADHD and Neurodevelopmental Conditions/Disorders

ADHD is also often associated with the traits of other neurodevelopmental disorders or conditions. ADHD can also be diagnosed alongside other neurodevelopmental disorders or conditions. These can commonly include:

- **Tourette syndrome:** Tourette syndrome is a neurological disorder that is characterised by involuntary movements and vocalizations called tics. Tics can be simple, such as blinking or clearing the throat, or complex, such as making obscene gestures or shouting.
- **Autism spectrum disorder (ASD):** autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disorder that is characterised by social, communication, and behavioural challenges. ASD is sometimes also known as ASC, or autism spectrum conditions.
- **Dyslexia:** dyslexia primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD): developmental coordination disorder (DCD), also known as dyspraxia, is a condition affecting physical co-ordination.

The relative risk of Tourette syndrome occurring in someone with ADHD is 3 to 10 times higher than in the general population. The relative risk of ASD occurring in someone with ADHD is 2 to 5 times higher than in the general population. The relative risk of someone with ADHD also having dyslexia is estimated to be 2 to 3 times higher than in the general population. The relative risk of someone with ADHD also having DCD is estimated to be 4 to 5 times higher than in the general population.

ADHD and Physical Health Conditions.

ADHD is also sometimes associated with physical health conditions, known as co-existing conditions. Some common co-existing physical health issues in adults with ADHD include:

- Cardiovascular disease: People with ADHD are more likely to have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity, all of which are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.
- Sleep disorders: People with ADHD are more likely to have insomnia, sleep apnoea, and restless legs syndrome, all of which can interfere with sleep and overall health.
- Migraine headaches.
- Hyperflexible joints and Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS), a group of disorders that affect connective tissues supporting the skin, bones, blood vessels, and many other organs and tissues.

- Injuries: People with ADHD are more likely to be injured in accidents, such as car accidents and falls.
- Gastrointestinal problems: People with ADHD are more likely to have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and constipation.
- Chronic pain: People with ADHD are more likely to experience chronic pain, such as headaches, back pain, and muscle pain.
- Metabolic conditions: People with ADHD are more likely to have obesity and hypothyroidism.