

CO-OCCURRING CONDITIONS · 5.1

ADHD and Autism Together (AuDHD): The Co-Occurring Picture

ADHD and autism co-occur often. AuDHD is the community term, now used clinically too, for someone who meets criteria for both. This is what the picture actually looks like.

FOR

Adults and parents considering both ADHD and Autism

AUDIENCE AGE

All ages

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

ADHD and Autism Together (AuDHD): The Co-Occurring Picture

What AuDHD is

- **Two separate diagnoses, present at the same time.** Not a third condition. The criteria for ADHD and the criteria for autism are both met. DSM-5 (2013) removed the old rule that stopped clinicians making both diagnoses. NICE guidance now recognises the co-occurrence.
- **Common, not rare.** Among autistic children and adolescents, somewhere between 30 and 50 percent meet ADHD criteria. Among people with ADHD, around 20 to 50 percent show clinically significant autistic traits. The figures vary by study but the picture is consistent: co-occurrence is far above chance.
- **Under-recognised for decades.** Two reasons. The old DSM-IV rule blocked the dual diagnosis. And each condition can mask the other; autistic structure can hide ADHD distractibility, and ADHD overactivity can hide autistic withdrawal.

How it shows up in real life

- **Routines you want but cannot maintain.** An autistic preference for predictability sitting alongside ADHD difficulty with task initiation and follow-through. The wanting and the doing are mismatched in a way that is exhausting to live with.
- **Intense interests that rotate or burn out.** The depth and focus are autistic. The impermanence is ADHD. A new special interest every six to twelve months is common.
- **Social difficulty that does not look like either alone.** Autistic mismatch with implicit social rules plus ADHD interrupting, missed tone and low patience produces a social picture harder to recognise as one condition or the other.
- **Sensory sensitivity that is harder to manage.** Autistic sensory sensitivity made harder by ADHD difficulty with attention switching and impulse regulation. The sensory experience is intense and the capacity to step back from it is limited.
- **Compounded executive function and emotional regulation.** Both conditions affect these independently. Together they reliably produce more difficulty, not less.

How we help

- **Combined ADHD and autism assessment.** NeuroFX offers a dedicated dual pathway as well as separate ADHD and autism pathways. The combined assessment uses the same structured tools but addresses both conditions in one written report.
- **Individualised medication decisions.** ADHD medication is the same in AuDHD as in ADHD alone, but the titration is often more cautious. Sensory profile, anxiety, sleep and appetite are all weighed in the choice of medication.
- **Support that recognises both, not one.** Reasonable adjustments, sensory support, sleep work and therapy all benefit from being AuDHD-aware rather than ADHD-only or autism-only.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP if you suspect AuDHD in yourself or your child. NHS routes for ADHD and autism are usually separate; Right to Choose in England applies to ADHD and, in some areas, to autism. NeuroFX offers private combined assessment where the dual picture is clear from the start. Seek urgent help via 111, 999 or A&E for any acute mental health crisis.

SOURCES

DSM-5-TR; NICE NG87; NICE CG142; NICE CG128; Hours et al. 2022 (Front Psychiatry); Lai et al. 2019 (Lancet Psychiatry)

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
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