

ADHD FOUNDATIONS · 1.8

ADHD Myths: What the Evidence Says About the Common Misconceptions

Few conditions attract as many confident opinions as ADHD. This summary addresses the most common myths against the actual evidence.

FOR

Adults and parents

AUDIENCE AGE

All ages

REVIEWED

17 May 2026

PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

ADHD Myths: What the Evidence Says About the Common Misconceptions

What ADHD is not

- **Not caused by parenting.** Heritability is around 70 to 80 percent in twin studies. Parenting affects how ADHD plays out, but does not cause it.
- **Not caused by sugar, screens or food colours.** Carefully controlled trials have not found these to cause ADHD. The condition was clinically described long before smartphones or modern diets.
- **Not a recent invention.** Prevalence has been broadly stable for decades. What has risen is recognition, particularly in adults and in women and girls.

What the evidence actually shows

- **ADHD attention is interest-driven.** Being able to hyperfocus on a video game does not rule out ADHD. Deep focus on something interesting and near-impossible focus on something dull are one of the most characteristic patterns.
- **Medication is not 'speed for kids'.** Stimulants increase dopamine and noradrenaline availability in the prefrontal cortex at carefully titrated therapeutic doses. They are licensed for ADHD in the UK and have substantial evidence behind them.
- **Treatment lowers substance-use risk.** Adults with untreated ADHD are at higher risk of substance use. Effective treatment is associated with lower rates of subsequent misuse, not higher.
- **Adult ADHD is real and common.** Most children with ADHD continue to experience meaningful symptoms into adulthood, although the presentation changes. Adult ADHD is about as common in the UK as moderate or severe depression.
- **Social media has helped recognition but does not replace assessment.** TikTok content has prompted many adults to ask the question. Answering it is a clinical job, done by a clinician, on the basis of a proper interview.

How we can help

- **Start with a proper assessment.** A NICE-aligned assessment looks at the whole picture: current symptoms, lifelong pattern, impact across settings, and co-occurring conditions.
- **Screen first if you want to test the waters.** Our online ADHD screening tool is a starting point. It does not give a diagnosis, but it can help you decide whether a full assessment is the right next step.
- **Private route where waiting is the barrier.** NeuroFX is a CQC-registered private clinic offering adult and paediatric ADHD assessment, with shared care handover to NHS GPs where the local ICB accepts it.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP if the pattern is persistent, dates to childhood and affects daily life. NeuroFX offers private ADHD assessment where waiting is a barrier. Seek same-day support via 111 (or 999 in an emergency) for any mental health crisis.

SOURCES

Faraone et al. 2021 (Neurosci Biobehav Rev); Polanczyk et al. 2014; Chang et al. 2014 (JAMA Psychiatry); Chen et al. 2014 (BMJ); Cortese et al. 2018 (Lancet Psychiatry); NICE NG87

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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