

GETTING ASSESSED · 3.11

Self-Diagnosis: What It Is For, What It Cannot Do

Self-diagnosis of ADHD or autism has a legitimate place in the pathway. This summary covers what it can usefully do, what it cannot do, and how to take the question from online recognition to a clinical answer.

FOR

Adults investigating their own ADHD or autism

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

Self-Diagnosis: What It Is For, What It Cannot Do

What self-diagnosis can do well

- **Open the question.** Many adults reach assessment because content online prompted them to ask. Increased awareness has been one of the main drivers of better diagnosis rates in the past decade.
- **Provide framework and language before assessment.** Reading reputable patient-facing material before a clinical conversation usually improves the quality of the developmental history and shortens the appointment.
- **Build community, particularly for autistic adults.** Autistic self-identification has been part of the community conversation for over two decades. Connecting with the autistic community before formal diagnosis is a meaningful step for many.

Its honest limits

- **It is not a clinical diagnosis.** A clinical diagnosis is a clinician's decision based on a NICE-aligned assessment. Where the diagnosis is needed for workplace adjustments, NHS access, medication or DSA, formal assessment is the route.
- **Self-report is informative but imperfect.** Some people who score above a screening cut-off do not meet full clinical criteria when properly assessed; others who score below the cut-off do. Persistence, pervasiveness and impairment are the clinical anchors.
- **It cannot do differential diagnosis.** ADHD and autism overlap with anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, trauma and several physical conditions. A clinical assessment considers all of these together.
- **Some online content is misleading.** Research on ADHD content on TikTok has found a substantial proportion of high-engagement videos contain misleading claims. Apply the same skepticism as you would to any other health content.

How we can help

- **Screening as a starting point.** Our online ADHD screening tool is a useful first step. It does not give a diagnosis; it helps you decide whether to pursue an assessment.
- **NICE-aligned assessment when you are ready.** NeuroFX offers private adult ADHD and autism assessment to the NICE standard, with shared-care handover to your NHS GP where the local ICB accepts it.
- **Take what you have learned to the appointment.** Concrete examples across home, work and relationships, plus any developmental history you can gather, make the formal assessment more efficient.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP if the pattern has been persistent and dates back to childhood. NeuroFX offers private adult ADHD and autism assessment where waiting is a barrier. Seek same-day help via 111 (or 999 in an emergency) for any mental health crisis.

SOURCES

NICE NG87; NICE CG142; Yeung et al. 2022 (Can J Psychiatry); Lewis 2016 (Int J Ment Health Nurs)

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

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