Dig a Little Deeper
PSYCHOTHERAPY & COUNSELLING
Mental Health for Every Mind.

ADHD RESOURCE HUB

ADHD Screening & Diagnosis in Ontario

A plain language guide to how ADHD is assessed and diagnosed in Canada, who can diagnose it, and how to take a meaningful first step toward clarity.

- Who can diagnose ADHD in Canada
- Choosing a medical or psychological pathway
- What to expect from a comprehensive assessment
- Credible self-screening tools
- How ADHD presents in girls and women

Diagnosis and Treatment of ADHD in Canada

This guide outlines how to seek, or seek clarification on, a formal ADHD diagnosis for yourself or a loved one. The path you choose depends entirely on your own or your family's circumstances and medical history.

Seeking a Formal ADHD Diagnosis?

1. Medical Diagnosis

- Family doctor
- Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner
- Specialist (e.g. psychiatrist, pediatrician)

2. Psychological Diagnosis

- ADHD assessment by a Psychologist
- Psychoeducational assessment

Both pathways lead to a formal diagnosis. Which one fits you depends on your age, school or work needs, and access to care.

ADHD Diagnosis FAQs

Who can diagnose me in Canada?

In Canada, ADHD can be formally diagnosed by a regulated health care practitioner who is:

1. a Medical Doctor (family doctor, pediatrician, or psychiatrist), or
2. a Nurse Practitioner, or
3. a Psychologist.

Your ADHD specialized psychotherapist can screen and assess for ADHD, and can also deliver non-pharmacological treatment such as behaviour therapy and training, and psychotherapy management.

While a credential allows a practitioner to conduct an assessment and provide a diagnosis, it does not guarantee that ADHD is within their area of specialized training. Always ask how long a practitioner has been assessing and treating ADHD, and how much specialized training they have in it.

Do I need a Psychologist Assessment (a psychoeducational report)?

Anyone still in school, all the way through college, university, or post-graduate programs, would benefit from a psychoeducational assessment that includes ADHD measures.

If your child is struggling in school, whether that looks like acting out or boredom, a psychoeducational assessment can offer a valuable roadmap to your child's brain. It can help rule ADHD in or out, and identify learning differences.

If you are an adult and only want ADHD ruled in or out, you can still have ADHD diagnosed through OHIP by a medical practitioner.

How long does it take to get a comprehensive assessment?

Adequate diagnosis must be based on a complete history and evaluation of the patient, not solely on the presence of the required number of DSM-5 characteristics.

At Dig A Little Deeper, experienced Mental Health Nurse Practitioners will:

1. carefully evaluate the intake and history forms completed before the first appointment,
2. use validated assessment tools that also screen for common comorbidities, as part of a differential diagnostic exercise,
3. meet for a minimum of ninety minutes, including family members for pediatric assessments, and
4. meet again afterward to share findings and suggest a treatment plan.

A formal diagnosis facilitates medical management through medication, as well as psychosocial support, including Individual Education Plan development from elementary through post-secondary school, and tailored workplace accommodations.

What if I just want to do therapy?

Sometimes a therapist will suggest screening in order to rule ADHD out. Many mental health conditions look like ADHD but are not, and the reverse is also true.

Depending on your own values, preferences, and needs, a formal diagnosis may or may not be necessary. But undiagnosed or under-treated ADHD is a well described barrier to positive therapy outcomes, and screening results can help shape your treatment plan.

Comprehensive Assessment, Diagnosis and Ongoing Care

Integrated Mental Health Services

Some mental health conditions benefit from a coordinated, experienced care team approach between the person, their therapist, and a medical practitioner.

Dig A Little Deeper's private, coordinated care clinic is led by experienced child and adult mental health Nurse Practitioners, highly trained in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of conditions such as ADHD, depression, anxiety, and OCD, in children, adolescents, and adults. The service is available through self-referral.

Getting started

Visit the Integrated Mental Health page to learn more, and sign up through the intake form to begin.

SELF-SCREENING

ADHD Self-Screening: A Thoughtful First Step

Credible screeners such as the ASRS are offered here as an ethical, accessible resource. Screeners are not diagnostic, but they can be a meaningful first step toward clarity.

Please keep in mind

- ✓ **It is not a diagnosis.** A formal diagnosis requires a comprehensive assessment by a qualified clinician who considers your full lifespan history and daily functioning.
- ✓ **It is normal to relate to some items.** Many people, especially those under chronic stress or dealing with anxiety, may recognize themselves in ADHD symptoms. A full evaluation can help distinguish what is really going on.
- ✓ **Your results are private and not stored.** You may wish to save or print your results to discuss with a healthcare provider.
- ✓ **A positive score means it is worth a closer look.** If your results suggest ADHD might be present, exploring next steps is encouraged.

If you feel validated, overwhelmed, or even relieved by your screener results, you are not alone. Many adults reach this point after years of struggling without answers. Dig A Little Deeper offers comprehensive, neurodivergent-affirming assessments and treatment tailored to adult ADHD and its common co-occurring conditions.

The Adult Self Report Scale (ASRS)

The most common screening tool used to determine whether further investigation is necessary is the standardized Adult Self Report Scale, a well established rating scale developed by the World Health Organization for adult ADHD screening. Research has shown the ASRS to be a highly

sensitive and specific screener for ADHD in adults, with less than one percent of individuals without ADHD scoring positive.

Download a fillable Adult Self Report Scale (source: CADDRA) to share with your health care clinician. Prefer an auto-calculated score? Try this automated screening quiz.

Other Screeners: Adults and Youth

- Adult ADHD Functionality Scale screener
- Adult Executive Functioning Scale, the ADEXI
- The European ICD-10 criteria for ADHD, via the ADHD Institute
- DSM-5 diagnosis criteria for youth, via the American Psychiatric Association

Wondering how much you are masking?

Explore the Adult ADHD Masking Measure and discuss your results with your doctor or therapist.

Screeners for Girls & Women

The primarily inattentive presentation of ADHD is more frequently found in women, although not exclusively, and can often go undiagnosed, resulting in later coexisting anxiety and depression. ADHD can also be misdiagnosed as one of these conditions.

Even today, many women with ADHD are evaluated only for depression and anxiety, while their underlying ADHD remains undiagnosed and untreated.

Adult Self-Test for Women

A self-test designed to reflect how ADHD symptoms present specifically in women and girls.

Lifespan Symptom List

A reference list of how ADHD symptoms present in girls and women across the lifespan.

Co-occurring Problems by Age

An overview of functional problems that commonly co-occur with ADHD in girls and women, organized by age.

Read more about the research on the lifespan presentation and impact of ADHD in Girls and Women on the Dig A Little Deeper blog.

NEXT STEPS

Ready to Talk to Someone?

Dig A Little Deeper offers comprehensive, neurodivergent-affirming ADHD assessment and treatment across our Ontario locations, alongside a wide network of therapists and coaches.

ADDRESS

6 Queen St. N. Suite 203, Bolton, ON L7E 1C8

PHONE

(905) 584-8963

EMAIL

admin@digalittledeeper.ca

ONLINE

digalittledeeper.ca

In crisis, or worried about safety? Call or text 9-8-8 for the Suicide Crisis Helpline, available across Canada, 24 hours a day.

This resource is for general education and is not a substitute for a comprehensive assessment by a qualified clinician. Screening tools referenced here, including the ASRS, are not diagnostic. Source content adapted from the ADHD Resource Hub at digalittledeeper.ca. Copyright Dig A Little Deeper. All rights reserved.