

# Maternal ADHD symptoms, child ADHD symptoms and broader child outcomes.

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## Abstract

### OBJECTIVE:

This study investigated the associations between maternal symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and child functional outcomes in a community-based sample of children with and without ADHD.

### DESIGN AND SETTING:

In this cohort study, children with ADHD and healthy controls were recruited through schools in Melbourne, Australia, using a combined screening (Conners 3 ADHD Index) and case confirmation (Diagnostic Interview Schedule for Children Version IV) procedure.

### PATIENTS:

117 children with ADHD and 149 control children were included in the analyses.

### MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES:

Maternal ADHD symptoms (Conners Adult ADHD Rating Scale) and child outcomes (ADHD severity, quality of life (QoL), academic competence, social-emotional functioning) were measured at a mean child age of 8.9 years.

### RESULTS:

Mothers of children with ADHD had clinically elevated ADHD symptoms compared with mothers of control children (adjusted analysis: 18.0% vs 2.0%,  $P < 0.001$ ). Elevated maternal ADHD symptoms were associated with greater child ADHD symptom severity and lower QoL by maternal report for children with (severity  $P = 0.01$ ; QoL  $P = 0.003$ ) and without (severity  $P = 0.003$ ; QoL  $P = 0.003$ ) ADHD. Elevated maternal ADHD symptoms were additionally associated with increased parent-rated emotional problems, peer problems and total impairment scores in children without ADHD (all  $P < 0.01$ ).

### CONCLUSIONS:

Maternal ADHD symptoms are associated with increased ADHD symptom severity and reduced QoL by maternal report in offspring with or without ADHD, and have broader negative associations with emotional and social functioning in children without ADHD. In the evaluation of the referred children, maternal ADHD symptoms should be considered and referral made to adult services where indicated.