

# Young adult mental health and functional outcomes among individuals with remitted, persistent and late-onset ADHD

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Abstract

## BACKGROUND:

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is associated with mental health problems and functional impairment across many domains. However, how the longitudinal course of ADHD affects later functioning remains unclear. **Aims** We aimed to disentangle how ADHD developmental patterns are associated with young adult functioning.

## METHOD:

The Environmental Risk (E-Risk) Longitudinal Twin Study is a population-based cohort of 2232 twins born in England and Wales in 1994-1995. We assessed ADHD in childhood at ages 5, 7, 10 and 12 years and in young adulthood at age 18 years. We examined three developmental patterns of ADHD from childhood to young adulthood - remitted, persistent and late-onset ADHD - and compared these groups with one another and with non-ADHD controls on functioning at age 18 years. We additionally tested whether group differences were attributable to childhood IQ, childhood conduct disorder or familial factors shared between twins.

## RESULTS:

Compared with individuals without ADHD, those with remitted ADHD showed poorer physical health and socioeconomic outcomes in young adulthood. Individuals with persistent or late-onset ADHD showed poorer functioning across all domains, including mental health, substance misuse, psychosocial, physical health and socioeconomic outcomes. Overall, these associations were not explained by childhood IQ, childhood conduct disorder or shared familial factors.

## CONCLUSIONS:

Long-term associations of childhood ADHD with adverse physical health and socioeconomic outcomes underscore the need for early intervention. Young adult ADHD showed stronger associations with poorer mental health, substance misuse and psychosocial outcomes, emphasising the importance of identifying and treating adults with ADHD.