

Alternative Causes of “ADHD” Symptoms in Adults	
Medical disorders	Thyroid disorder, inflammatory illnesses (HIV, Lyme disease), small vessel ischemic disease, sleep apnea, menopause, recent chemotherapy, toxin exposure, prenatal cocaine exposure.
Traumatic brain injury	Look for repeated, mild concussions from sports injuries or other traumas.
Age-related cognitive decline	Typically begins after age 45. Memory problems predominate and hyperactive symptoms are lacking.
Medication effects	Anticholinergics, anticonvulsants, chronic benzo use, substance abuse.
Sleep deprivation	The cognitive effects of sleep deprivation improve with stimulants, but the health effects do not.
Depression and bipolar disorder	Cognitive problems are common during mood episodes, and they can persist even after the episodes resolve. Cognitive problems from a mood disorder tend to worsen as the episodes recur. In contrast, cognitive problems due to ADHD are stable and present from an early age.
Personality disorders	Borderline personality disorder and ADHD can be genuinely comorbid, but borderline patients have a greater risk of aggression and paranoia on stimulants. Patients with perfectionistic personality styles may over-emphasize mild cognitive problems and self-report ADHD.
Other	Autism, learning disorders, generalized anxiety disorder, and childhood neglect can all present as ADHD.

From the Article
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by Chris Aiken, MD

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