

Driving and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

ADED – The Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder commonly becomes evident in early childhood and probably will be chronic in nature. The disorder consists of developmental deficiencies that can range from inhibiting behaviors to initiating and sustaining behaviors. Some doctors will prescribe medication for this disorder. Some individuals may improve with age. Any level of ADD or ADHD may increase the risk of unsafe driving issues. These issues stem from underdeveloped visual perception skills, impaired ability to self-regulate behavior, moods and responses. Lack of organization and the inability to concentrate are also underlining issues. An individual’s ability to learn information for the licensing knowledge test works well when one-on-one instruction is provided. Learning from one’s driving mistakes takes extra time. All of the above can result in unsafe driving encounters, unpredictable driving actions, or an increased number of “minor” accidents. Medical clearance to drive is encouraged.

If someone you know has ADD or ADHD, look for the following warning signs that may interfere with safe driving:

- Doesn’t observe signs/signals
- Slow to respond to traffic lights
- Failure to yield right of way
- Multiple minor accidents
- Drifting while driving
- Impaired eye/hand/foot coordination
- Speed fluctuation/inappropriate speeds
- Unable to focus with distractions and driving
- Does not observe all areas of the vehicle before driving in reverse
- Difficulty with interpreting traffic environments/does not anticipate dangerous situations

If you or someone you know is having any of the above warning signs, a driver evaluation may be indicated. A driver rehabilitation specialist, with knowledge about medical conditions, can provide a comprehensive evaluation and determine one’s ability to drive.

This assessment should include:

- Visual perception
- Functional ability
- Reaction time
- Behind-the-wheel evaluation

