




Tactile Sensitivity & ADHD: What the Research Shows

Focus: Women & Adults | Fact-Checked & Research-Based

ADHD Grls and WOmEn Are More Tactile Defensive Than Boys

Girls and Women with ADHD are more likely to be sensitive to touch (tactile defensiveness) than boys with ADHD.

Their siblings without ADHD don't show these issues—so it's linked to ADHD, not family traits.

 **Implication:** Sensory sensitivity in girls may be a key marker of ADHD.

ADHD Adults Often Experience Tactile Overload

A 2024 study found that adults with ADHD:

- Feel more sensitive to touch than others
- Have a lower tolerance for things like mild electrical stimulation
- Show unique brain responses to touch—especially when touched by others
- These issues are strongly linked with how inattentive someone is

 **Implication:** Touch sensitivity in adults is real, measurable, and impacts focus.

ADHD Has Its Own Tactile "Signature"

Kids with only ADHD struggle with detecting touch and judging the order of touch

Kids with ASD (Autism) have different touch issues—like telling textures apart

These differences match ADHD symptoms like inattention and hyperactivity


 **Implication:** Touch tests might help tell ADHD apart from other conditions like autism.

Sensory Over-Responsivity (SOR) Adds Stress & Anxiety

Kids with ADHD + sensory over-responsivity show stronger stress responses (sweat, skin reactions)

They are more likely to have clinically significant anxiety

This suggests that sensory issues impact emotional and physical wellbeing

 Implication: Sensory overload isn't just annoying—it affects mental health.

Sensory Sensitivity Is Common in ADHD at All Ages

Most people with ADHD say they're sensitive to sensory input—like sound, light, or touch

These sensitivities can make attention, emotions, and daily life harder to manage

 Implication: Sensory issues deserve more attention in ADHD diagnosis & support.

Summary Table

Finding	What It Means
Girls with ADHD show more touch sensitivity than boys	ADHD presents differently by gender
Adults with ADHD have real, measurable touch overload	Sensory issues don't go away with age
ADHD-specific patterns in touch detection/order	May help separate ADHD from autism
Sensory over-responsivity increases anxiety & stress	Emotional wellbeing is linked to sensory health
Sensory sensitivity is common and affects daily life	Support should include sensory-friendly strategies