

# AUGUST NEWSLETTER

## Diagnosed as an Adult



Something that has been obvious to practitioners, parents, researchers and anyone who has received a diagnosis lately is that there seems to be a lot more neurodivergent people than ever before. Some people will tell you ‘birds of a feather flock together’ and that’s why it seems like so many people you know and spend time with are neurodivergent. If you haven’t received a diagnosis it might even leave you wondering if you are too.

But this isn’t just how it seems. A study conducted in 2019 found that there has been a 123% increase in adult ADHD diagnosis in the past 10 years. Another found that a sample of 400,000 adult the prevalence of autism doubled between 2011 and 2019.

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## How Does This Happen?

Across all age groups diagnosis of neurodevelopment disorders, such as ADHD and Autism, have risen steadily for decades. But, in recent years there has been a notably sharp increase, especially in adults.

While some conditions don't manifest until adulthood, progression of neurodevelopment conditions typically first appears in childhood. Even according to the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; this is the book that almost every practitioner uses to diagnose you with a mental health disorder), a diagnosis should only be given if the symptoms appeared in the first 10 years of life. For many adults receiving a diagnosis their childhood symptoms are clear in hindsight, but the possibility of them being diagnosed with ADHD or Autism once they are older than 10 is significantly lower. Likely because nobody was looking for it.

Most children have structure within their lives that helps give them strict routine. Such as school, daycare, activities, friends and family. Which all happens with minimal choice or input from the child. This can lessen the severity or hide a child's academic or social challenges, often times all the way through school.

As we age we gain freedom and are expected to create our own structure, schedule and make choices while maintaining the social norms of a balanced lifestyle. A lot of the support we relied on is removed and for those with a neurodevelopment condition symptoms can



become very evident creating feelings of being overwhelmed or out of step. At this point challenges that were previously masked may start causing problems. In fact symptoms may not only become more visible with time, but may worsen.

## Why Now?

There has been an incredible amount of combining factors that has led to so many adult diagnosis. One of the most prominent contributing factor to the rise in Autism and ADHD diagnoses is the increased awareness and improved diagnostic practices. Thanks to greater access to information, mental health professionals, educators, and parents now better understand the traits associated with these neurotypes.

This heightened awareness has led to more accurate and timely identification, allowing individuals to receive appropriate support and accommodations earlier in life. In the past, many autistic individuals or those with ADHD may have gone undiagnosed or misdiagnosed due to a limited understanding, typically when they do not present in a stereotyped fashion. With the rise of social media and the ability for people to publicize their experiences through platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, many adults are sharing their experiences of being neurodivergent. This increased awareness has led to a spread of recognition and self identification for adults who were otherwise (and commonly) being treated for other mental health problems or not treated at all.

With awareness comes the breaking of stigma and increased acceptance. As more people receive a diagnosis friends, family members and the individual can become more empowered to share their experiences, advocate for their needs, and contribute to public discussions; and therefore increasing visibility. This encourages and requires our community to adapt and accommodate the needs of neurodivergent individuals, promoting a more equitable society.

Check out the link to access an article about neuro-inclusive designs in architecture:

<https://gbdmagazine.com/neuro-inclusive-design-in-architecture/>



Something that is important to note is past (and current) gender bias while diagnosing. In the past both autism and ADHD were considered to be a 'boys' diagnosis. We now know that that is not true. Autism is 4 times more likely in girls than boys and ADHD is twice as common in girls. The previous idea that these were 'boys' conditions probably came from the fact research at that time was primarily focused on boys and frequently excluded girls. This meant how researchers conceptualized symptoms, diagnostic criteria, treatment was all based on how it appeared in boys.

What we now know is that girls symptoms and expression of neurodivergence is significantly more subtle than boys. The symptoms that are more likely to appear in boys are; hyperactivity for ADHD, intense niche interests for autism, are not as common in girls. These are also the most readily observable characteristics by adults, the people doing the diagnosing.



Meanwhile girls show symptoms, like distractibility, and girls with autism in particular are more likely to “mask” and use compensatory strategies to help them appear neurotypical—all of which can make their symptoms easier to miss or dismiss. Part of the rise of neurodivergence is that large numbers of women are now receiving diagnosis in adulthood as they begin to advocate for themselves when they become aware that they operate in the world differently.

## Now What?

Once a diagnosis is received the real work begins. Many adults have mixed feelings about diagnosis. Ultimately, whatever someone pulls out of the postdiagnosis emotional grab bag—whether joy, regret, gratitude, anger, or relief—their reaction is OK and perfectly normal. There is no ‘typical’ path; everyone has a very individual reaction. Fortunately, research suggests even the most complex postdiagnosis journey usually has a happy ending. In literature reviews looking at either autism or ADHD, self-acceptance and an increase in self-esteem following an adulthood diagnosis are consistent themes; diagnoses, on the whole, tend to reduce self-blame and increase feelings of control.

Once diagnosed one of the best things someone can do is learn more about their diagnosis. Learning as much as possible can have a surprisingly positive effect on self-esteem. This can also inform your decisions for treatment and lifestyle changes.



Above all, a diagnosis can give someone permission to finally unmask their authentic self. The rise in autism and ADHD diagnoses reflects a positive shift in society's understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity.

## Did You Know?

A number of celebrities are neurodivergent, here are a few you may recognize!

### **Simone Biles**

is very open about being diagnosed with ADHD



### **Billie Eilish**

was diagnosed with Tourettes at age 11

### **Sia**

was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum at age 45





# Easy Recipes Master Before Back to School

## Taco Rice Bowls

Tastiness Rating: ★★★★★

This is a leftover friendly quick meal with many variations!

### Ingredients:

1- 1.5 scoops of cooked rice

½ cup of protein (sliced chicken, ground beef or pork)

½ cup corn kernels boiled

Chopped tomatoes to taste, I like to use halved cherry tomatoes

Rinsed black beans to taste

Sprinkle of taco seasoning

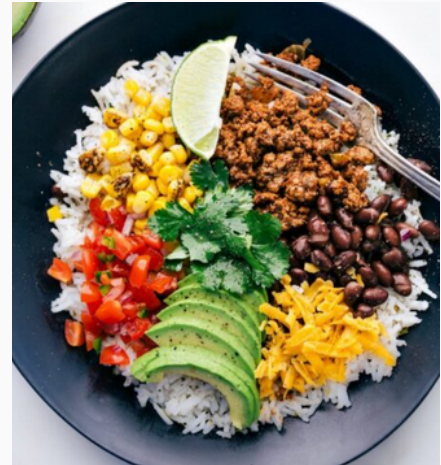
Shredded Cheese

### *Toppings*

Sour cream

Salsa

Sliced avocado



### Quick Tip:

I use all frozen or canned vegetable for this meal

### Instructions:

Place all ingredients that need to be warmed in a bowl (protein, rice, cooked veggies if leftover). Warm in microwave to your liking. Add ingredients that were just cooked if you have any (ie, if you just cooked the rice add in with reheated ingredients now). Sprinkle in taco seasoning and mix. Add shredded cheese, if you would like cheese melted place back in microwave for 15-30 seconds. Add tomatoes and black beans. Add all other toppings you would like. Enjoy!

### Variation:

For a different flavour forgo the taco seasoning, cheese, beans and corn. Instead add steamed vegetable such as broccoli, cauliflower and carrots. Top with plum sauce and add a sprinkle of soy sauce.

## Banana Sushi

**Tastiness Rating:** ★★★★★

Sweet and nutritious! Great for lunch or a snack on the go!

**Ingredients:**

1 peeled banana

1 tortilla wrap

Nutella or Peanut Butter

**Instructions:**

Lay out tortilla and spread Nutella or peanut butter on the wrap so it is covered. Lay banana on along the edge of the wrap. Roll it up. Slice to resemble sushi rolls. Enjoy!



## On-the-go Egg Cups

**Tastiness Rating:** ★★★★★

Great for the person who has to grab and go. High in protein, but does require minimal prep work.

**Ingredients:**

6 eggs

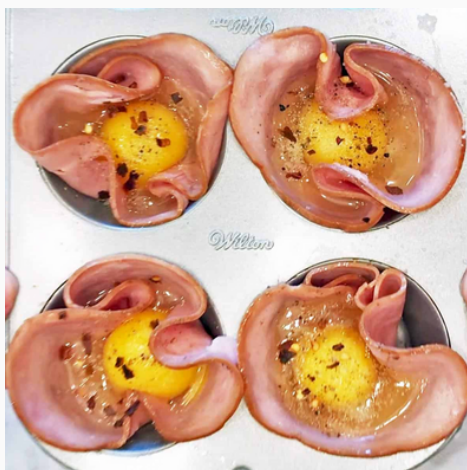
1 pack deli ham

salt and pepper

- you can also add a tiny bit of onion powder and red pepper flakes

**Instructions:**

Line a 6 cup baking pan with luncheon ham. Use the ham slice to create the cup. Crack each egg into the ham cup. Bake at 400F for 12-15 minutes. When baked, use a spoon to scoop out each egg-ham cup. Serve immediately or store in fridge to be reheated.



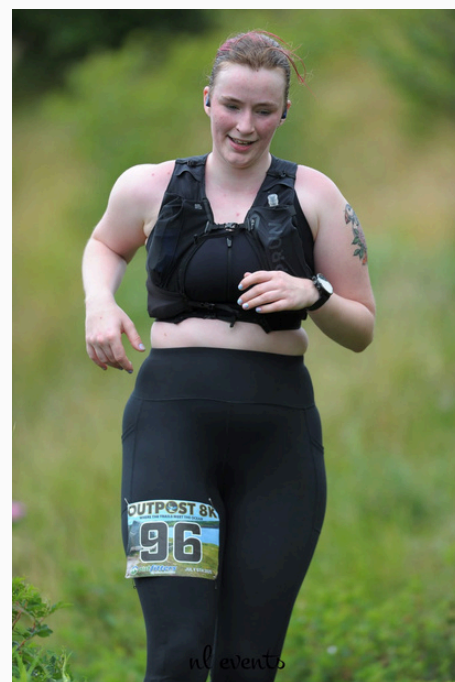
## Updates, This & That

### Clinic Closure

Please note that the clinic will be closed Labour Day weekend. **We will not be open September 1st.**

### Shout out to Shivohn!

Our kinesiologist and yoga instructor Shivohn will be taking part in the Joy Run 50 Ultramarathon for her birthday. We wish her the best of luck and a very Happy Birthday! The Align team will be cheering her on!



## Wellness at the Canada Games

This year the Canada Games medical team will include mental health professionals for the first time in history!

Olivia will be volunteering as a psychotherapist during both weeks helping athletes be their best on and off the field. She will be located at the Polyclinic on Campus. As someone who previously competed at the Canada Games she is very excited to return as a professional

