

Special Considerations for Adult Women with Autism/ADHD

Estrogen-Dopamine Interaction Assessment

Estrogen affects dopamine levels, which can impact ADHD symptoms throughout the menstrual cycle. Track these symptoms daily for at least one full cycle:

Cycle Day: ____ (Day 1 = first day of period)

Rate severity 0-3:

- ☐ Ability to focus
- ☐ Working memory function
- ☐ Emotional regulation
- ☐ Executive function
- ☐ Motivation level
- ☐ Energy level
- ☐ Sensory sensitivity
- ☐ Medication effectiveness (if applicable)

Notes:

- Days 1-5 (menstruation): Typically worst ADHD symptoms
- Days 6-11 (follicular): Often improving symptoms
- Days 12-16 (ovulation): Often best functioning
- Days 17-28 (luteal): Gradually worsening symptoms

Autistic Burnout Recognition Checklist

Autistic burnout often goes unrecognized in women. Check all that you've experienced:

Past Year Experiences

- ☐ Loss of skills/abilities you previously had
- ☐ Increased difficulty managing sensory input
- ☐ Reduced tolerance for social interaction
- ☐ Increased difficulty masking autistic traits
- ☐ Extreme fatigue not relieved by rest
- ☐ Reduced executive function
- ☐ Increased meltdowns/shutdowns
- ☐ Difficulty communicating/finding words
- ☐ Increased need for sameness/routine

- ☐ Feeling "stuck" or unable to do previously manageable tasks

Potential Triggers

- ☐ Major life transition (job, move, relationship)
- ☐ Extended period of masking/camouflaging
- ☐ Accumulation of sensory stressors
- ☐ Social demands exceeding capacity
- ☐ Loss of support system or accommodation
- ☐ Health issues/illness
- ☐ Hormonal changes (perimenopause, pregnancy, etc.)
- ☐ Extended period without adequate rest/recovery
- ☐ Trauma or significant stress
- ☐ Pressure to perform neurotypically

Female-Specific Masking Assessment

Women often mask their neurodivergent traits differently than men. Rate how frequently you use these strategies: 0 = Never 1 = Occasionally 2 = Frequently 3 = Almost Always

Social Masking

- ☐ Carefully observing and mimicking others' social behaviors
- ☐ Preparing scripts/topics for conversations
- ☐ Using humor or self-deprecation to hide difficulties
- ☐ Taking on "helper" or "caretaker" roles to navigate social situations
- ☐ Developing special interest in psychology or human behavior
- ☐ Overcompensating with extreme politeness or people-pleasing
- ☐ Mirroring others' communication styles and phrases
- ☐ Developing "personas" for different social contexts

Professional/Academic Masking

- ☐ Working significantly harder than peers to meet same standards
- ☐ Creating extensive organizational systems to compensate for executive function
- ☐ Taking on extra work to hide difficulties with specific tasks
- ☐ Spending excessive time preparing for meetings/presentations
- ☐ Developing expertise in specific areas to offset general challenges
- ☐ Using humor to deflect from mistakes or confusion
- ☐ Staying late or arriving early to manage workload without being observed
- ☐ Developing reputation as "quirky" but valuable contributor

Personal Life Masking

- ☐ Developing systems for household management that seem excessive to others
- ☐ Limiting social engagements to prevent burnout

- ☐ Creating socially acceptable explanations for sensory needs/preferences
- ☐ Using physical appearance (clothing, makeup, etc.) strategically
- ☐ Scheduling excessive alone time for recovery
- ☐ Developing acceptable special interests (makeup, fashion, cooking, childcare)
- ☐ Making self-deprecating jokes about sensory needs or executive function
- ☐ Finding compatible partners who compensate for challenges

Total Masking Score: ____/72

Interpretation:

- 0-24: Minimal masking
- 25-48: Moderate masking (common in late-diagnosed women)
- 49-72: Significant masking (very common in undiagnosed autistic women)

Co-occurring Conditions Screening

Women with autism/ADHD often have co-occurring conditions that complicate diagnosis.
Check all that apply:

Anxiety-Related

- ☐ Generalized anxiety
- ☐ Social anxiety
- ☐ Panic attacks
- ☐ Obsessive-compulsive tendencies
- ☐ Specific phobias

Mood-Related

- ☐ Depression episodes
- ☐ Mood swings
- ☐ History of burnout periods
- ☐ Emotional dysregulation
- ☐ Rejection sensitive dysphoria

Physical

- ☐ Chronic fatigue
- ☐ Digestive issues
- ☐ Chronic pain
- ☐ Sleep disorders
- ☐ Sensory processing difficulties
- ☐ Migraine headaches
- ☐ Coordination/balance issues

Other

- ☐ History of eating disorders
- ☐ Perfectionism
- ☐ People-pleasing tendencies
- ☐ Difficulty with interoception (sensing bodily states)
- ☐ History of misdiagnosis
- ☐ Trauma responses
- ☐ Identity exploration/uncertainty

Note: Many women receive diagnoses of anxiety, depression, or personality disorders before their autism or ADHD is recognized.