



Courtesy of the CDC:

ADHD often goes undiagnosed into adulthood. To diagnose ADHD in adults and adolescents age 17 years or older, only 5 symptoms are needed instead of the 6 needed for younger children. Symptoms might look different at older ages. For example, in adults, hyperactivity may appear as extreme restlessness or wearing others out with their activity.

How is ADHD diagnosed?

Healthcare providers use the guidelines in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth edition (DSM-5)¹, to help diagnose ADHD. This diagnostic standard helps ensure that people are appropriately diagnosed and treated for ADHD. Using the same standard across communities can also help determine how many children have ADHD, and how public health is impacted by this condition.

DSM-5 Criteria for ADHD

People with ADHD show a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity–impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development:

1. Inattention: Six or more symptoms of inattention for children up to age 16 years, or five or more for adolescents age 17 years and older and adults; symptoms of inattention have been present for at least 6 months, and they are inappropriate for developmental level:
 - Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, at work, or with other activities.
 - Often has trouble holding attention on tasks or play activities.
 - Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
 - Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (e.g., loses focus, side-tracked).
 - Often has trouble organizing tasks and activities.
 - Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework).
 - Often loses things necessary for tasks and activities (e.g. school materials, pencils, books, tools, wallets, keys, paperwork, eyeglasses, mobile telephones).
 - Is often easily distracted
 - Is often forgetful in daily activities.

2. Hyperactivity and Impulsivity: Six or more symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity for children up to age 16 years, or five or more for adolescents age 17 years and older and adults; symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity have been present for at least 6 months to an extent that is disruptive and inappropriate for the person's developmental level:
- Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet, or squirms in seat.
 - Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected.
 - Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may be limited to feeling restless).
 - Often unable to play or take part in leisure activities quietly.
 - Is often "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor".
 - Often talks excessively.
 - Often blurts out an answer before a question has been completed.
 - Often has trouble waiting their turn.
 - Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games)

In addition, the following conditions must be met:

- Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present before age 12 years.
- Several symptoms are present in two or more settings, (such as at home, school or work; with friends or relatives; in other activities).
- There is clear evidence that the symptoms interfere with, or reduce the quality of, social, school, or work functioning.
- The symptoms are not better explained by another mental disorder (such as a mood disorder, anxiety disorder, dissociative disorder, or a personality disorder). The symptoms do not happen only during the course of schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder.

Based on the types of symptoms, three kinds (presentations) of ADHD can occur:

- *Combined Presentation*: if enough symptoms of both criteria inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity were present for the past 6 months
- *Predominantly Inattentive Presentation*: if enough symptoms of inattention, but not hyperactivity-impulsivity, were present for the past six months
- *Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation*: if enough symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity, but not inattention, were present for the past six months.

Because symptoms can change over time, the presentation may change over time as well.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affects people of all ages, including adult women. A study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found the percentage of privately-insured U.S. women aged 15-44 who filled a prescription for a medicine to treat ADHD increased nearly 350% between 2003 and 2015. Options for managing ADHD symptoms during pregnancy should be discussed with a healthcare provider as women consider getting pregnant.

- ADHD medicine prescriptions to reproductive-aged women with private insurance increased for all included age groups from 2003 to 2015.

Age (Years)	Increase in ADHD Medicine Prescriptions
15 – 19	170%
20 – 24	450%
25 – 29	700%
30 – 34	560%
35 – 39	400%
40 – 44	383%

- The increase in ADHD medicine prescriptions from 2003 to 2015 was because of an increase in stimulant medicines, not the non-stimulant medicine atomoxetine (Strattera©).
- Some women may take ADHD medicine before they know they are pregnant, or may continue taking their ADHD medicine during pregnancy because it helps with their ADHD symptoms. Currently, there is very little information available about the safety of taking ADHD medicines during pregnancy.
- Women should discuss options for managing ADHD symptoms during pregnancy with their healthcare providers if or when they start planning for a pregnancy.

About ADHD and ADHD Medicine

- People with ADHD may have trouble controlling impulsive behaviors (may act without thinking about what the result will be), paying attention, or feel overly restless or over active.
- Many healthcare providers prescribe medicine to adults to manage ADHD symptoms.
- Some commonly prescribed brand name ADHD medicines include Adderall© (mixed amphetamine salts), Vyvanse© (lisdexamfetamine), and Ritalin© (methylphenidate).