

Current DSM-IV Criteria for ADHD

The year 2000 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR) provides the official criteria for diagnosing ADHD, offered here for informational purposes only and modified to make them more accessible to the public. Only trained healthcare providers can diagnose or treat ADHD.

The term *developmental level* refers to the normal milestones associated with a certain age. To qualify for the diagnosis, each of the five points (in Roman numerals) must be met.

These guidelines, established and rigorously tested for diagnosing ADHD in children, might be of more limited value in evaluating adults. For more information, review the previous pages explaining the diagnostic process.

I. Either A or B

A. Six or more of the following symptoms of inattention have been present for at least six months to a point that is disruptive and inappropriate for developmental level:

1. Often does not give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities
2. Often has trouble keeping attention on tasks or play activities
3. Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly
4. Often does not follow instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions)
5. Often has trouble organizing activities
6. Often avoids, dislikes, or doesn't want to do things that take a lot of mental effort for a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework)
7. Often loses things needed for tasks and activities (for example, toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools)
8. Is often easily distracted
9. Is often forgetful in daily activities

B. Six or more of the following symptoms of *hyperactivity-impulsivity* have been present for at least six months to an extent that is disruptive and inappropriate for developmental level:

Hyperactivity:

1. Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat
2. Often gets up from seat when remaining in seat is expected

3. Often runs about or climbs when and where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may feel very restless)
4. Often has trouble playing or enjoying leisure activities quietly
5. Is often “on the go” or often acts as if “driven by a motor”
6. Often talks excessively

Impulsivity:

1. Often blurts out answers before questions have been finished
 2. Often has trouble waiting one’s turn
 3. Often interrupts or intrudes on others (for example, butts into conversations or games)
- II. Some symptoms that cause impairment were present before age seven years.
- III. Some impairment from the symptoms is present in two or more settings (for example, at school/work and at home).
- IV. There must be clear evidence of significant impairment in social, school, or work functioning.
- V. The symptoms do not happen only during the course of a Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Schizophrenia, or other Psychotic Disorder. The symptoms are not better accounted for by another mental disorder (for example, Mood Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Dissociative Disorder, or a Personality Disorder).

Source: American Psychiatric Association: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision*. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2000, by permission.