# NHS introduces new two-minute test for adult ADHD diagnosis



The NHS has introduced a new, simple two-minute test that aims to help identify signs of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in adults. Developed in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and experts from Harvard Medical School, the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS) Symptom Checklist consists of 18 questions focused on assessing a person’s attention span, restlessness, and organisational skills.

Individuals who achieve a certain score on the ASRS may be referred for additional specialist assessments. The screening tool has garnered endorsement from various NHS organisations, charities, and clinicians in both the UK and the US.

The introduction of this test comes amid controversy at Oxford University, where it has been reported that nearly all students undergoing ADHD screening were diagnosed with the disorder, subsequently receiving extra time for examinations. Such incidents have sparked a debate over the potential overdiagnosis of ADHD, particularly as the number of prescriptions for ADHD medications has been rising annually, with some attributing this increase to the influence of social media platforms like TikTok.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting voiced concerns over the potential for overdiagnosis of mental health conditions more broadly, stating that “too many people are being written off.”

The ASRS checklist is divided into two parts. Part A includes six questions deemed highly effective at predicting the presence of ADHD, such as “How often do you have problems remembering appointments or obligations?” and “How often do you fidget or squirm with your hands or feet when you have to sit down for a long time?” Scoring four or more on Part A suggests that an individual has symptoms that are consistent with ADHD and warrants further investigation.

Part B of the checklist includes 12 questions intended for clinicians to explore symptoms with the patient. Examples from this section include, “How often do you make careless mistakes when you have to work on a boring or difficult project?” and “How often do you find yourself talking too much when you are in social situations?”

According to the NHS guidelines, adults can only be diagnosed with ADHD if they exhibit symptoms that have persisted since childhood. If a patient has difficulty recalling childhood symptoms, clinicians may request access to historical school records or interview parents or former teachers to gather more information.

However, some experts have expressed concerns about the diagnostic process. Professor Joanna Moncrieff from University College London commented on the variability of ADHD diagnoses, noting that “one psychiatrist in one service can think almost everyone has it while another psychiatrist in another service thinks very few people have it.” She highlighted the subjective nature of ADHD criteria, suggesting that many individuals experience symptoms to varying degrees and may potentially misattribute their challenges to ADHD rather than considering broader situational factors.

ADHD is characterised as a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that adversely impacts academic, occupational, or social functioning. The Royal College of Psychiatrists estimates that ADHD affects approximately three to four adults per 100.

The growing public interest in ADHD diagnoses is partially attributed to celebrities discussing their personal experiences with the disorder. Figures such as model Katie Price and actress Sheridan Smith have spoken openly about their ADHD, which may encourage others to seek diagnosis. However, some experts caution that while overdiagnosis may be a concern, it is also possible that many adults are only now being correctly diagnosed after previously having their symptoms dismissed.

Research published earlier this week indicated a nearly 20% increase in prescriptions for ADHD medications since the onset of the pandemic. Experts noted that social media platforms often propagate information that could lead people to misconstrue everyday challenges as potential ADHD symptoms, raising concerns over misinformation and the motivation to seek a diagnosis based on viral trends. While the conversation surrounding ADHD continues to evolve, the ongoing development and dissemination of tools like the ASRS may play a significant role in how the condition is understood and diagnosed in the future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://add.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/adhd-questionnaire-ASRS111.pdf> - This URL provides the Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS) Symptom Checklist, which is used to assess ADHD symptoms in adults. It supports the claim about the ASRS being a tool for identifying ADHD signs.
* <https://adhdclinic.co.uk/test-for-adhd-in-adults/> - This website discusses ADHD symptoms and screening tests for adults, aligning with the article's description of ADHD characteristics and the need for professional assessments.
* <https://www.adhdcentre.co.uk/adhd-quiz/> - This URL offers a free online ADHD test, which, like the ASRS, helps identify common ADHD symptoms. It supports the idea that various tools are available for assessing ADHD.
* <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-(adhd)> - This webpage from the Royal College of Psychiatrists provides information on ADHD, including its prevalence and diagnostic criteria, supporting the article's claims about ADHD's impact and diagnosis.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/> - The NHS webpage on ADHD provides information on symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment, supporting the article's discussion on ADHD diagnosis and management.