# Annie Lennox’s late diagnosis sheds light on hidden ADHD in women



You are never too old to discover important truths about yourself, as demonstrated by the Scottish singer Annie Lennox, who recently revealed she was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the age of 70. Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour, Lennox described how the diagnosis helped make sense of her lifelong traits such as high sensitivity and keen observation, which she came to understand as aspects of being neurodivergent. This revelation sheds light on a growing recognition of undiagnosed ADHD, particularly among adult women who often exhibit different symptoms from those traditionally associated with the condition.

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by difficulties with concentration, impulse control, and activity levels. Historically, much of the research and diagnostic criteria have centred on young males, leading to a significant gender bias. Women with ADHD tend to present with subtler, less hyperactive symptoms and often struggle with emotional regulation, shyness, and sensitivity to noise. These differences have contributed to many women going undiagnosed until adulthood or later in life, sometimes after decades of unexplained challenges in personal and professional spheres. Annie Lennox is part of this wave of women seeking answers to their lifelong experiences.

The delayed diagnosis of ADHD in women is not without consequences. Research indicates that individuals with untreated ADHD are at higher risk of developing secondary mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety, with some studies linking delayed diagnosis to premature mortality. Clinical psychologist Dr Jenna Vyas-Lee from London’s KOVE mental health practice points out that women with ADHD may experience "internal hyperactivity" rather than the overt physical restlessness typically seen in children, manifesting as a continuous need for stimulation, whether through snacking, social media, or other outlets. She describes this as the brain being understimulated or "hungry," explaining why some people with ADHD might be misjudged as having addictive behaviours.

Moreover, ADHD can profoundly affect multiple areas of life. Data shows individuals with ADHD often face educational difficulties, employment instability, and challenges in maintaining relationships. One study examining women diagnosed with ADHD or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in childhood found persistent impairments in educational achievement and increased vulnerabilities to violence and financial insecurity persisting into adulthood. Other research highlights the socially taxing coping strategies women with ADHD tend to employ, such as masking their symptoms, which unfortunately can lead to underestimated support needs and increased psychological distress.

Despite the longstanding nature of the condition, ADHD remains poorly understood and underdiagnosed, particularly in women. Diagnostic tools and clinical guidelines, largely based on male populations, do not always capture the female ADHD phenotype. As a result, many women receive alternative or incorrect diagnoses, delaying appropriate intervention. Experts stress the necessity of accounting for gender-specific presentations in diagnostic assessments, to improve accuracy and support for affected individuals.

Currently, there is a significant backlog in NHS ADHD services, with over half a million people in England waiting for assessment, some for years. In response, some patients are exploring private diagnostic options under the Right to Choose scheme, which permits referrals to private providers meeting NHS standards. Thorough assessments are recommended to ensure reliability, avoiding cursory evaluations that can miss nuances.

Following diagnosis, individuals have a range of choices including medication and lifestyle adaptations to manage symptoms. Even for those not formally diagnosed, small changes—like structured routines, sensory management, and mindfulness—can ease daily challenges.

Annie Lennox’s public disclosure highlights the importance of recognising ADHD beyond childhood and male-centric frameworks. It encourages broader awareness that ADHD can manifest differently across the lifespan and between genders, and underscores the ongoing need to improve diagnostic pathways and support systems for adults, especially women, who have lived with the condition undetected for years.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11891363/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10201085/), [[6]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2976801/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10302366/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11891363/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-15143799/Undiagnosed-ADHD-Psychologist-shares-telling-signs-you-neurodivergent-condition-Annie-Lennox-diagnosis-age-70.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10201085/> - A study examining the long-term outcomes of women diagnosed with ADHD and/or ASD in childhood found that the majority continued to meet full criteria for these conditions in early adulthood. The research highlighted significant impairments in educational achievement, increased need for financial support, and a higher risk of experiencing mental and physical violence. The findings underscore the persistence of ADHD and ASD symptoms into adulthood and the associated challenges faced by women diagnosed in their youth.
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10302366/> - This research explores the experiences of female students with ADHD, focusing on the impact of the condition on social, academic, and psychological functioning. The study reveals that females with ADHD often develop masking strategies to conceal their symptoms, leading to underestimation of their needs. The findings suggest that undiagnosed or late-diagnosed ADHD in women can result in significant academic difficulties, low self-esteem, and increased risk of mental health issues, highlighting the importance of timely and accurate diagnosis.
4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC11891363/> - A review of current methods and issues in evaluating ADHD highlights gender biases in diagnosis, noting that diagnostic criteria have traditionally been developed using predominantly male child samples. The review points out that females are less likely to be referred for assessment and often receive misdiagnoses, leading to under-recognition of ADHD in women. It emphasizes the need for improved diagnostic tools and greater awareness of gender differences in ADHD presentation to ensure accurate identification and treatment.
5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2696867/> - An article discussing the course of ADHD in adulthood notes that while the disorder typically has its onset in early childhood, it can persist into adulthood, often presenting as a variant of normal personality traits. The article highlights that adults with ADHD may experience significant lifestyle impairments, including lower educational achievement, frequent job changes, and unemployment. It underscores the chronic nature of ADHD and the importance of recognizing and addressing the disorder in adults.
6. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2976801/> - This study investigates the late adolescent and young adult outcomes of girls diagnosed with ADHD in childhood. The findings suggest that these individuals experience difficulties such as more conflict with their mothers, fewer romantic relationships, and increased depressive symptoms compared to their peers. The research highlights the long-term impact of childhood ADHD on social and emotional well-being, emphasizing the need for continued support and intervention into adulthood.
7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6610733/> - A longitudinal study examining late-onset ADHD in women found little evidence for its occurrence. The research suggests that apparent late-onset ADHD symptoms may be better explained by comorbid internalizing disorders, such as depression or anxiety, rather than a new onset of ADHD. The study emphasizes the importance of thorough assessment and consideration of other mental health conditions when diagnosing ADHD in adults.