

One in five U.S. kids has a mental health disorder, CDC reports

16 May 2013, by Brenda Goodman, Healthday Reporter



ADHD is most common current diagnosis in children aged 3 to 17.

(HealthDay)—As many as one in five American children under the age of 17 has a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year, according to a new federal report.

Released Thursday, the report represents the government's first comprehensive look at mental disorders in children. It focuses on diagnoses in six areas: attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), behavioral or [conduct disorders](#), mood and [anxiety disorders](#), autism spectrum disorders, substance abuse, and Tourette syndrome.

The most [common mental disorder](#) among children aged 3 through 17 is ADHD. Nearly 7 percent—about one in 15 children—in that age group have a current diagnosis, according to the report from the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

For other disorders, 3.5 percent of children currently have behavioral or conduct problems, 3 percent suffer from anxiety, about 2 percent have depression and about 1 percent have autism. About two children out of 1,000 aged 6 to 17 have Tourette Syndrome.

Among teens, about 5 percent had abused or were dependent on [illegal drugs](#) within the past year. More than 4 percent were abusers of alcohol, and nearly 3 percent reported being regular [cigarette smokers](#).

The report, which supplements the May 17 issue of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, also noted gender differences in mental disorders.

"Boys are more likely than girls to have most of the disorders overall," said Ruth Perou, the team leader for child development studies at the CDC.

Boys specifically are more prone to ADHD, behavioral or conduct problems, [autism spectrum disorders](#), anxiety and Tourette syndrome, and are more likely to be smokers than girls, Perou said. They're also more likely to die by suicide.

"On the other hand, girls are more likely to have depression or an alcohol-use disorder," she said.

Although this is the first time the CDC has tried to compile prevalence estimates for some of the most common mental disorders in a single report, the agency has long tracked rates of many of these illnesses through population surveys.

"We are seeing increases across the board in a lot of mental disorders," Perou said. Some of the biggest jumps have been in ADHD and autism. "We don't know if it's due to greater awareness, or if these conditions actually are going up," she said.

Perou said that is a question they will try to answer as they continue to track children's mental disorders going forward.

"The good news is that mental disorders are diagnosable and treatable," she said. "If we act early, we can really make a huge difference in children's live and in families' lives overall."

More information: To find out more about children's mental health, head to the [U.S. National Institute for Mental Health](#).

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