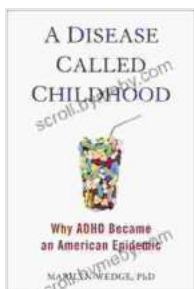


# Why ADHD Became an American Epidemic

In the United States, ADHD is now one of the most common childhood disorders, affecting an estimated 6.4 million children. But how did ADHD become so prevalent? And why does it seem to be so much more common in the United States than in other countries?

In his new book, *Why ADHD Became an American Epidemic*, Richard DeGrandpre traces the rise of ADHD diagnoses in the United States, from its origins in the 1950s to its current status as one of the most common childhood disorders. DeGrandpre argues that the rapid increase in ADHD diagnoses is not due to a sudden increase in the number of children with the disorder, but rather to a combination of factors, including changes in diagnostic criteria, increased awareness of the disorder, and the rise of the pharmaceutical industry.



## A Disease Called Childhood: Why ADHD Became an American Epidemic by Marilyn Wedge

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 1038 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 269 pages



## Changes in diagnostic criteria

The first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), published in 1952, did not include ADHD as a diagnosis. The second edition, published in 1968, included a new diagnosis called "hyperkinetic reaction of childhood," which was similar to ADHD but required more severe symptoms. In 1980, the DSM-III eliminated the term "hyperkinetic reaction of childhood" and replaced it with "attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity." The DSM-IV, published in 1994, renamed the disorder "attention deficit hyperactivity disorder" and expanded the diagnostic criteria to include children who were not hyperactive.

These changes in diagnostic criteria have made it easier for children to be diagnosed with ADHD. In the 1950s, only children who were severely hyperactive and disruptive were diagnosed with the disorder. Today, children who are simply inattentive or impulsive can be diagnosed with ADHD.

### **Increased awareness of the disorder**

In the 1950s and 1960s, ADHD was a relatively unknown disorder. But in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a growing awareness of the disorder, thanks in part to the work of advocacy groups such as CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder). This increased awareness led to more children being diagnosed with ADHD.

### **The rise of the pharmaceutical industry**

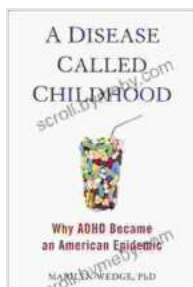
The pharmaceutical industry has played a major role in the rise of ADHD diagnoses. In the 1990s, pharmaceutical companies began to develop and market new drugs to treat ADHD. These drugs, such as Ritalin and

Adderall, were effective in reducing the symptoms of ADHD, and they quickly became the most common treatment for the disorder.

The pharmaceutical industry has also been accused of marketing these drugs aggressively to doctors and parents. Some critics argue that the pharmaceutical industry has created a false epidemic of ADHD by convincing doctors and parents that their children need to be medicated.

The rise of ADHD diagnoses in the United States is a complex issue that cannot be attributed to any single factor. However, changes in diagnostic criteria, increased awareness of the disorder, and the rise of the pharmaceutical industry have all played a role in the increasing prevalence of ADHD.

It is important to note that ADHD is a real disorder that can cause significant problems for children and adults. However, it is also important to be aware of the factors that have contributed to the rise of ADHD diagnoses in the United States. By understanding these factors, we can make more informed decisions about how to treat ADHD and how to prevent it from becoming even more common.



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