

Global Developmental Delay DSM-5 Criteria

This diagnosis is reserved for individuals under the age of 5 years when the clinical severity level cannot be reliably assessed during early childhood. This category is diagnosed when an individual fails to meet expected developmental milestones in several areas of intellectual functioning, and applies to individuals who are unable to undergo systematic assessments of intellectual functioning, including children who are too young to participate in standardized testing. This category requires reassessment after a period of time.

The diagnosis of global developmental delay is limited to children younger than 5 years old, but these children often evolve to meet diagnostic criteria for intellectual disability.

What causes global developmental delay?

Bread category	Possible causes	Proportion of diagnostic field
Prenatal intrinsic	Genetic Central nervous system malformations Metabolic	Up to 47% Up to 28%
Prenatal extrinsic	Teratogens/toxins (drugs of abuse, medications, etc.) Infections	Up to 21%
Perinatal	Asphyxia Prematurity Neonatal complications	Up to 55%
Postnatal	Neglect/psychosocial environment Infections Trauma Toxins	Up to 11%

Additional notes

References

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Bélanger, S. A., & Caron, J. (2018). Evaluation of the child with global developmental delay and intellectual disability. *Paediatrics & Child Health*, 23(6), 403–419. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxy093>