

ADEM can develop at any age, but is much more frequent in children than adults. Males and females are affected in equal numbers, although a slight male preponderance was seen in a couple pediatric studies. In children, the mean at presentation is between 5-8 years old. The exact incidence of ADEM in the general population is unknown. One study conducted in San Diego, California estimated the incidence of ADEM in persons under 20 years of age at .4 per 100,000. ADEM seems to peak in the winter and spring months in studies conducted in the United States. A diagnosis of ADEM is made based upon identification of characteristic symptoms, a detailed patient history, a thorough clinical evaluation and a variety of specialized tests including imaging techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). An MRI uses a magnetic field and radio waves to produce cross-sectional images of particular organs and bodily tissues and can demonstrate characteristic brain lesions in individuals with ADEM. Additional tests to exclude other conditions may also be performed. Such tests may include infectious, immunologic, and metabolic tests.