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Disability Research

**Autism**

What are the possible causes of Autism?

Individuals who have Autism are born with it. It has been proven that people with Autism have structural and chemical differences in their brains compared to the brains of normally developing children. Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders such including Asperser’s Syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder are believed to be multi-factorial disorders. The factors include complex genetic interactions, nutritional deficits or overloads, exposure to chemicals or viruses, errors during the embryonic neural tube closure process, dysfunctional immune systems, and even allergies. Many studies have also shown that genetics play a big role when determining the victims of Autism. Another factor that could be a possible cause is exposure to pollutants and toxins during fetal development. Also, exposure to Rubella during early pregnancy is thought by some scientists to increase the risk of having an autistic child. Some researchers believe that viral infections may be responsible for the fact that many autistic individuals have a decreased number of helper T-cells which are used to help the immune system fight infections, leading to impaired immune systems. Early immune response to viral infection, either in the embryo, fetus, or during infancy may cause the immune system to malfunction resulting in the production of antibodies against the fetus’ or child’s brain tissue, creating the brain damage seen in Autistic children.

What are the common symptoms of Autism?

No two children with Autism are the same or have the same symptoms. You can’t give Autism a specific set of symptoms and identify cases with those guidelines because there are many stages of Autism and the disease reacts differently with every child’s body. But there are three common symptoms that are found in every autistic child or person.

1. **SOCIAL SKILLS:**

* Fails to respond to his/her name
* Has poor or no eye contact with others
* Appears not to hear you at times when talking to them
* Resists physical contact
* Appears unaware of others’ feelings
* Seems to prefer playing alone and in his/her ‘own world’

1. **LANGUAGE:**

* Starts talking later than the age of two and has other developmental delays by up to two and a half years
* Rarely makes eye contact when talking or making requests

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* Speaks with an abnormal tone or rhythm
* Can’t start a conversation with another human being or keep one going
* May repeat words of phrases but doesn’t understand how to use them.

1. **BEHAVIOR:**

* Usually performs repetitive movements such as rocking or spinning
* Develops specific routines or rituals that are only understood by them
* Becomes disturbed or irritated at the slightest change of their routines
* May be easily fascinated by new items or parts of an object.

What are any parental concerns?

All babies develop at their own pace, and don’t follow exact times of when to walk or speak. But autistic infants usually show signs of delayed development by the age of one and a half. If parents start to notice things such as slower development and movement than normal, they should consult a doctor as soon as possible and further tests should be conducted.

What are treatments for Autism?

Autism is a chronic disease with no cure, but therapies and behavioral interventions are designed to work on specific symptoms and may bring substantial improvement to some. In education and behavior interventions, therapists use highly structured and intensive skill oriented training sessions to help children develop social and language skills. Family counseling for the parents and siblings of children with Autism often helps them cope with the particular challenges of living with an Autistic child. Also, doctors may prescribe medications for the treatment of specific symptoms such as anxiety, depression, or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Antipsychotic medications are used to treat severe behavioral problems.