



Early Warning Signs of Autism

Doctors Call for Early Detection, Treatment of Autism

The American Academy of Pediatrics has called for every child to be screened for autism.

Over the past 15 years, there has been an enormous, some say alarming, increase in autism diagnoses among young children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed guidelines for detecting autism and getting early treatment, with the help of Rebecca Landa, director of the Center for Autism and Related Disorders at the [Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore](#).

Key Facts on Autism:

- Autism is a neurological disorder in which people have difficulty communicating and interacting socially with others.
- Autistic children often speak little, ignore others and display repetitive behavior, such as spinning in circles or focusing on one object for hours. They may excel at something in detail, such as spelling or playing a musical instrument, but become overwhelmed when trying to navigate the world at large.
- In the United States, about 17 percent of children have a developmental or behavioral disability such as autism, mental retardation and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.
- New studies suggest that the earlier the detection, the greater chance of improvement in language, cognitive, social and motor skills.

Early Signs of Autism:

At 6 months:

- Not making eye contact with parents during interaction.
- Not cooing or babbling.
- Not smiling when parents smile.
- Not participating in vocal turn-taking (baby makes a sound, adult makes a sound, and so forth).
- Not responding to peek-a-boo game.

At 12 months:

- No attempts to speak.
- Not pointing, waving or grasping.
- No response when name is called.
- Indifferent to others.
- Repetitive body motions such as rocking or hand flapping.
- Fixation on a single object.
- Oversensitivity to textures, smells, sounds.
- Strong resistance to change in routine.
- Any loss of language.

At 24 months:

- Does not initiate two-word phrases (that is, doesn't just echo words).
- Any loss of words or developmental skill.

Source: Rebecca Landa, Center for Autism and Related Disorders at the Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore.

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