

Does Your Child Have a History of Autism and Seizures?

If your child has a history of autism, then you will want to watch for one of the more serious symptoms: seizures. The first thing that you will have to learn if your autistic child experiences seizures is how to recognize an emergency. The following conditions make a seizure an emergency:

- If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, or if there are several seizures in a row without a full recovery occurring between them.
- Breathing difficulty that persists. Though it is common for an autistic child to look as though he or she has briefly stopped breathing during the seizure, breathing should quickly resume.
- If there are any injuries sustained during the seizure.
- Confusion or unconsciousness that persists.
- If it is your child's first seizure.
- If your child has a history of seizures, but there is a significant change in the typical pattern, type, symptoms, or length of the seizure.

The occurrence of autism and seizures together is relatively common. The Journal of Child Neurology published a study called "Prospective preliminary analysis of the development of autism and epilepsy in children with infantile spasms" (Askalan R, et al) which showed that by puberty, 25 percent of autistic children will develop seizures. It is not known why the incidence of seizures increases so dramatically with adolescence. The study also showed a connection between babies who experience West Syndrome, which causes infantile spasms, and children who will later receive an autism diagnosis.

Autistic children who are at the highest risk for seizures are those who also have specific neurological conditions, for example, neurofibromatosis, tuberous sclerosis, and untreated phenylketonuria.

Many parents of autistic children who display unusual behaviors often struggle to recognize the difference between these behaviors and seizures, or whether their children are indeed having seizures at all. After all, some autistic behaviors can include sudden repetitive movements or swaying, as well as a decreased awareness of his or her surroundings. This can be exactly what a seizure looks like, depending on the person.

To tell the difference between these unusual behaviors and seizures, use the following information:

- Seizures occur suddenly without being provoked by a specific occurrence. On the other hand, unusual behaviors are usually brought about by frustration, fear, anger, or as a consequence of a certain event.
- Seizures will usually follow a type of pattern within one person, though the length and intensity may differ from time to time. However, autism behaviors will often vary in their movements and mannerisms.
- Seizures are often accompanied with a sensation of cold or fear and are frequently followed by weakness, headache, or exhaustion. After a seizure, it is unlikely that an autistic child will simply resume an activity right away.
- Similar to staring 'off into space' of an autistic child, absence attacks are a form of small seizure that cause a loss of consciousness for 10 seconds or less, and may involve some mild facial movements or eye blinking. Lip smacking or shuddering may also occur in more complex partial seizures. These people would not respond to any environmental stimuli. However, an autistic child displaying staring mannerisms will.

If your child has a history of autism and you believe that he or she may be having seizures, it is important to speak to your doctor or pediatrician right away to discuss the severity of the seizures as well as possible treatments and preventative measures.

About the Author

Grab your free copy of Rachel Evans' brand new Autism Newsletter - Overflowing with easy to implement methods to help you and your family cope with a [history of autism and seizures](#) along with other autism characteristics.

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