

Causes

At this point in time we do not know what causes it. However, current research indicates that anything that can produce structural or functional damage to the central nervous system can also produce the condition of Autism. We know that certain viruses and known genetic conditions are associated with Autism. In addition, there are families that have more than one child with autism. At present, it is believed that about 10% of all cases can be accounted for genetically. It is difficult to tell parents why their child has autism since researchers believe the problem to be caused by different factors, and in most cases, the cause is never known. Autism is not caused by an unhappy home environment, both parents working, mental stress during the pregnancy, poor handling by the mother, an emotional trauma, or other psychological factors. You cannot cause a child to become autistic.

Some parents also often ask that if they have one child with autism, what the chances are that another child they have will also have autism. About 10% of the cases of Autism can be accounted for genetically. If there is one child with Autism in the family, risks of having another child with autism is much higher than in the general population. So far, there is no reliable test to detect Autism in the foetus.

Autism is caused by abnormalities in brain development and function. A number of environmental and genetic factors affect how the brain develops, both, during pregnancy and thereafter. These factors affect neurodevelopment and brain functioning through altering brain structures and neurotransmitter (brain chemicals) interaction which interferes with overall processing of incoming information and the person's thoughts, feelings and actions. There are several theories, but generally we have more questions than answers about autism. Genetics are thought to play a role because siblings and relatives of individuals with autism are more likely to have a similar or different type of ASD. There may also be a history of speech/language and other developmental disorders in the families of children with an ASD.

Associated conditions

Disorders that are found in a small group of individuals with autism include Fragile X syndrome, tuberous sclerosis, untreated metabolic condition, or chromosomal conditions. Sixty to seventy-five percent of people with autism have accompanying mental retardation. About one third of people with autism develop seizures. Those with an ASD also have a higher chance of secondary mental health problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, etc.).