

High-risk genes for schizophrenia and autism may cause impairment, even before mental illness

People who carry high-risk genetic variants for schizophrenia and autism have impairments reminiscent of disorders such as dyslexia, even when they do not yet have a mental illness, a new study has found.

Rare genetic alterations called copy number variants (CNVs), in which certain segments of the genome have an abnormal number of copies, play an important part in psychiatric disorders: Individuals who carry certain CNVs have a several-fold increased risk of developing schizophrenia or autism. But previous studies were based on individuals who already have a psychiatric disorder. In a study published in *Nature*, researchers report that people with these variants but no diagnosis of autism or a mental illness still show subtle brain changes and impairments in cognitive function.

Read the full, original story: [Brain changes precede schizophrenia and autism](#)