

Geneticists unraveling why autism strikes boys more than girls

It has long been clear that autism strikes boys more often than girls. But when girls do get the condition, they tend to be at the severely affected end of the spectrum. Now, a group of geneticists thinks they've figured out why.

Boys, it seems, can develop autism from a relatively small genetic hit, according to a study in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*. It takes more of a genetic wallop, though, to cause autism in girls – so when they do get it, they're worse off.

The same explanation holds true, researchers think, for the gender imbalance in ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder), intellectual disabilities and schizophrenia.

The study's lead researcher, geneticist Evan Eichler of the University of Washington, said this is one more piece of the genetic puzzle of autism – which will eventually lead to new diagnoses and treatments.

About 500 genes have been connected to autism – “There's lots of different ways to create an autistic child,” he said. But those genes mostly fit into about a dozen different pathways, suggesting different treatment approaches may be most effective for each subtype.

Read full original story: [Researchers look at boy-girl differences in autism](#)