

Early autism interventions, before 12 months, appear effective

Early interventions may be effective at treating the symptoms of autism in very young infants, according to a pilot study in children under 18 months.

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) normally start receiving treatment at about 2 years old or older. This is an improvement on 10 years ago, when children with ASD were unlikely to receive treatment until they were 4 years old or more. But Sally Rogers and Sally Ozonoff at the University of California, Davis, have sought to intervene even earlier, in infants as young as 6 months old.

In a pilot study, Rogers and Ozonoff taught the parents of seven infants with symptoms of ASD, aged between 6 and 15 months old, how to overcome developmental delays through interactions during play, bathing and diaper-changing.

Two researchers independently used multiple tests and evaluations to distinguish between infants with symptoms of ASD and those who might just be developing more slowly than average. "These were very symptomatic infants," says Rogers. "In general these babies did not use their bodies, faces or voices to send and receive messages from their caregivers on what they liked or didn't like, or wanted more or less of."

Six of the infants began to show accelerated development by 18 months of age, and by the time they were 3 years old, their development was in the normal range, says Rogers. In contrast, four infants who qualified for the study but whose parents chose not to participate continued to show a worsening of ASD symptoms.

Read the full, original story: [Early autism intervention speeds infant development](#)