

Searching for signs of autism in early infant behavior

Fearfulness and shyness in babies and toddlers predict features of autism at age 7, according to a new [study](#). But early problems with impulse control and hyperactivity do not augur autism features.

The findings suggest that [autism and anxiety have similar roots](#) in the brain, but autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) do not, says lead investigator [Tony Charman](#), chair of clinical child psychology at King's College London.

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Autism often coincides with anxiety and ADHD: Up to about 80 percent of people with autism also [meet the criteria for ADHD](#) or anxiety. And the three conditions tend to run together in families, suggesting they share genetic roots.

Previous studies have explored behavioral predictors of each of these conditions, but few have examined all three simultaneously.

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Studies of children without autism show that fearfulness and shyness early in life predict anxiety later in life; and hyperactivity, inattention and poor impulse control predict ADHD.

Charman and his colleagues similarly found that young children with high activity levels and poor inhibitory control have more ADHD features at age 7 than those who are calm and controlled. But these behaviors do not track with autism traits or diagnosis; they also do not predict anxiety.

Still, the findings may help clinicians distinguish autism from ADHD early on.

Read full, original post: [Signs of anxiety in infancy may foreshadow autism](#)