

Autism may share genetic links to schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and other psychiatric disorders

Some of the inherited variants implicated in autism also increase the odds of [other conditions](#), including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), according to a new [study](#).

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“These disorders, which we think of as very clinically different, might be related at the level of their genetic basis,” says lead investigator [Jordan Smoller](#), associate chief for research in psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Smoller and his colleagues analyzed data from 727,126 people, about one-third of whom have one or more of eight psychiatric conditions. The team focused on so-called common variants — single-letter changes to DNA that appear in 1 percent or more of the population.

The team linked 146 variants to least one condition, and most of them to multiple conditions.

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“More and more, the picture that’s emerging is that there are multiple [variants] associated with, let’s say, a psychiatric vulnerability that is not specific to one disorder,” says [Tinca Polderman](#), assistant professor of complex trait genetics at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands, who was not involved in the work. “Whether it develops into autism or [something else] may have to do with other factors.”

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