

People with autism more likely to experience headaches and epilepsy

People with autism have more brain-related health problems, such as headaches and epilepsy, than typical people do, according to a survey of [twins](#). The study is the first to look at associations between autism and physical health problems among twins.

The study found no association between [autism](#) and other physical conditions, such as [gastrointestinal problems](#) and infectious diseases, however.

“I find it particularly remarkable that our results are so clear in terms of confirming that [autism] but also autistic traits are associated with neurological alterations, and no other somatic issues are equally associated,” says lead investigator [Sven Bölte](#), director of the Center of Neurodevelopmental Disorders at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden. The findings also support the idea that autism is a condition of the brain, Bölte says, and not of the immune system or the gut.

Understanding associations such as these can help clinicians look out for autistic people’s health problems. That is particularly important when treating people who may have difficulties communicating.

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The researchers hope to analyze a larger database, such as the [Child and Adolescent Twin Study in Sweden](#), which has more than 32,000 participants. Ultimately, they say, they hope their work will help scientists identify autism subtypes and pathways that underlie the condition.

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