

Autism Diagnoses Now More Common in Latino, Black Kids

The rise in autism diagnoses among Latino and Black kids is likely due to improved access to screening for all.

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For the first time, Latino and Black children in the United States are being diagnosed with [autism](#) more frequently than white children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The CDC estimated that among all 8-year-olds in the United States, 1 in 36 had autism in 2020, an increase from 1 in 44 in 2018. For children of color, this rate increased faster compared with white kids. It is estimated that about 3% of Black, Latino and Asian or Pacific Islander children have been diagnosed with the brain development disorder, compared with 2% of white children, according to [The Associated Press](#).

In the past, autism was most commonly diagnosed in white children. These children typically came from middle- or upper-income families who could afford autism specialists. In fact, as recently as 2010, white children were 30% more likely to be diagnosed with autism than Black children and 50% more likely than Latino children.

Published earlier this year in [JAMA Network](#), a study found that during the 2017 to 2018 academic year, Latino and Black children had less access to autism services than white children. Improved access to care, screening and autism services for all kids may have influenced the recent increase in diagnoses in Latino and Black children, according to experts.

Previously, autism was typically diagnosed only in kids with severe communication or socialization problems or those with unusual or repetitive patterns, according to the AP. About 30 years ago, the term “autism spectrum disorders” was introduced to cover a broad range of complex brain development disorders, including autism, Asperger’s syndrome and more.

To learn more, click [#Autism](#) or read Tu Salud’s [Health Basics on Autism Spectrum Disorder](#). It reads in part:

What is autism spectrum disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) describes a wide range of complex brain development

disorders that can strike children at an early age. The spectrum of autism disorders includes autistic disorder, Asperger's syndrome and pervasive developmental disorders. Those diagnosed with ASD are also assessed for levels of intellectual disability and language impairment. But people with ASD can also excel in visual skills, music, math and art. Additionally, ASD may affect an individual's physical health, triggering digestive issues and problems sleeping. The developmental disorders occur in every racial and ethnic group and across all socioeconomic levels. ASD affects both sexes, but boys are more likely than girls to develop ASD.

What are the symptoms of autism spectrum disorder?

When compared with their peers, children with ASD may seem different. Common signs of ASD include not babbling or pointing by age 1, not saying single words by age 16 months or two-word phrases by age 2. In addition, children with ASD may not respond when their name is called, have difficulty paying attention, exhibit poor eye contact, are unable to play well with other children, won't smile or are unresponsive to social interaction. Also, many kids with the disorder engage in repetitive and obsessive patterns of behavior, such as rocking, twirling or flapping their arms.

Children with ASD often find it hard to talk about their feelings and don't understand the feelings of others, so they may prefer to be alone. At an early age, these kids may also suffer from a delayed development of their motor skills, which can affect their dexterity and ability to handle tasks requiring hand-eye coordination. As they become older, children with ASD may find it hard to learn how to sit up, walk, use eating utensils or hold a pen or pencil to write.

What causes autism spectrum disorder?

After many years of not knowing what caused ASD, researchers now believe that most often it's environmental factors and gene mutations that trigger the disorder. According to experts, if a child is predisposed to ASD, there are a variety of risk factors that can increase the likelihood that he or she will develop the disorder. Some of these include older parents conceiving a child, a mother being ill during pregnancy and complications that can occur at this time, especially when babies' brains are deprived of oxygen.