

Autism and Schizophrenia

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What is Autism?

Autism is a developmental disorder with symptoms that appear within the first three years of life. Its formal diagnostic name is Autism Spectrum Disorder. The word 'spectrum' indicates that autism appears in different forms with varying levels of severity. That means that everyone with autism experiences their own unique challenges, symptoms, and strengths.

Symptoms appear early in a child's development, but the diagnosis may occur later. Autism is diagnosed when symptoms cause developmental challenges that are not better explained by other conditions.

Autism is extremely hard to diagnose because there is no known biological marker for autism. No blood or genetic test can diagnose the disorder. Clinics rely on observation, medical histories, and questionnaires to determine whether someone has autism.

Some of the ways physicians use to test for autism include:

- A 20-question test designed for toddlers between 16 to 30 months old.
- An interactive screening tool comprising 12 activities that assess play, communication and imitation.
- There is also a parent's evaluation, which is a general development parent interview form that identifies areas of concern by asking the parent questions.

For many years, autism was exceedingly rare, about one in two thousand kids, due to the fact the diagnostic criteria were not clearly defined until nineteen eighty when it was included in the dsm.

The dsm is now the standard reference that health care providers use to diagnose mental and behavioral conditions including autism.

Symptoms of Autism

Unresponsive to others

One of the signs of autism appears in babies, when they are unresponsive with others. Quite often babies stare at people, and will look towards where they hear a sound. At four months or earlier, babies start to smile. When a baby starts to crawl, they enjoy interacting with other children. Children with autism may not respond to these signs and prefer to play by themselves.

Repetitive Behavior Patterns

Children with autism can tend to repeat certain behaviors. Some common behaviors can be jumping up and down, stacking objects on top of one another, or making a certain sound repeatedly. The children can sometimes repeat a movement. Individuals with autism can find it difficult to deal with any changes with their daily routine and surroundings.

Lack of Language skills

Another sign is they may start off babbling but suddenly become silent before they turn six months old. It may take them much longer to acquire basic language skills. Sometimes they may repeat the same word time after time having a hard time forming sentences. Some may have little expression in their communications.

Difficulty Socializing

Some people with autism see the world around them, and the words and actions of others, in a different way. This can make it hard for people with autism to communicate or relate to others. Many people with autism can find it hard to control their emotions when responding to a given situation.

Unpredictable Behavior

Sometimes individuals with autism can engage in completely unpredictable behaviors. Sometimes it will appear as self-harming. For instance, someone may purposely bang their head on something or become aggressive towards someone around them.

Unusual Touch and Sound Sensitivities

A person with autism may have unusual responses to certain objects or sounds. Many people with sensitivities are hypersensitive to noise. A ceiling fan may bother a child with this condition to the point of tears. Others may recoil at a physical touch.

Different Kinds of Autism

Level One Autism Spectrum Disorder, previously called Asperger's syndrome (ASD)

The term Asperger's Syndrome is no longer considered an official diagnosis even though still very used in the autism community. But the correct term is Level One Autism Spectrum Disorder. Most people with this disorder are of normal or above normal intelligence and possess strong verbal skills but social communication is a challenge. Level One Autism Spectrum Disorder is sometimes described as "high functioning" autism. They can also often develop an intense interest in one or two subject areas. Children may have an advanced vocabulary for their age.

Rhett Syndrome

Rhett's Syndrome primarily affects girls and starts to become evident around 6 months old. Symptoms include lack of social communication and impaired ability to use one's hands, such as having a hard time with gross and fine motor skills or repetitive hand and arm flapping. Rhett syndrome is no longer on the spectrum now that they have learnt it is caused by a genetic mutation.

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD)

This type of autism can be extremely hard on parents as it often causes confusion and fear. Children who once seemed to be developing well, were socially interactive, and talked and made eye contact suddenly cease being themselves shut down. Doctors assume there is a relation between this type of autism and seizures.

Kanner's Syndrome or Classic Autistic Disorder

Children with Kanner's Syndrome show a need for routine and often display no interest in the world around them. They usually turn their attention inward and show little desire to interact with others.

Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD-NOS)

This autism is less severe than others. Children with this type of autism may have experienced delays in benchmarks. Like speaking and walking and often be behind other children who are on pace to hit their developmental milestones. Children with PDD can manage the symptoms more easily than children with the other types of autism.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a chronic brain disorder that less than one percent of the population has. It affects how a person thinks, feels, and acts. They may have a hard time knowing what is real and what is imaginary. Schizophrenia is not caused by childhood experiences, poor parenting, or lack of willpower. Babies who experience a low birth weight or were born during premature labor or without enough oxygen and more likely to develop health problems like schizophrenia. Schizophrenia usually appears in early adulthood. There is still no cure, but it is treatable and manageable with medication and behavioral therapy.

Symptoms of Schizophrenia

Confused Speech

A person's speech and thinking may jump from one subject to another with no logical reason. It may be hard to follow what the person is trying to say. They may also come up with words or say words that only have meaning to the person speaking. They may think you are saying something else and have a different conversation from their end, talking about unrelated things.

Lack Of Emotional Expression

Someone with schizophrenia might respond inappropriately or not at all to sad or happy occasions.

Lack Of Motivation

They may neglect everyday activities including self-care. They might also be barely able to talk or move. With lack of motivation for things they will quite often isolate themselves from others and withdrawal from families and friends and lose the motivation to keep up with schoolwork or other outside activities.

Hallucinations

A lot of people with schizophrenia experience hallucinations the most common type is hearing voices. But they can experience all senses they may hallucinate feel, taste or smell things that are not there.

Types Of Schizophrenia

Paranoid Schizophrenia

Paranoid schizophrenia or schizophrenia with a paranoia as doctors are now calling it, is the most common type of schizophrenia. It means your mind does not agree with reality. It affects how you think and behave it can show up in different ways and at different times even in the same person. People with paranoia delusions are unreasonably suspicious of others.

Delusions are fixed beliefs that seem real to you even when there is strong evidence that they are not. Paranoid delusions can also be called delusions of persecution, it reflects profound fear and anxiety. Along with the inability to tell what is real and not real, some examples of how it can make people with schizophrenia feel include:

- A co-worker is trying to hurt you.
- Your spouse is cheating on you.
- The government is spying on you.
- People in your neighborhood are trying to hurt you.

These things can cause troubles in relationships and make them feel that strangers are going to hurt them, and make them feel like staying inside and alone. They can hear voices of people making fun of them and insulting them. Sometimes even telling them to do harmful things to themselves and others.

Hebephrenic / Disorganized Schizophrenia

Hebephrenic schizophrenia is typified by shallow, inappropriate, and emotional responses, foolish or bizarre behavior, and hallucinations. It can cause people to have an extremely hard

time concentrating and maintaining a train of thought which affects the way they talk. People with disorganized speech might speak incorrectly, respond to questions with unrelated answers, say illogical things, or shift topics frequently.

Symptoms Of Hebephrenic Schizophrenia include:

- Rapidly shifting topics with no connections between topics.
- Saying the same thing repeatedly.
- Made up words that only have meaning to the speaker.
- Use of rhyming words without meaning.
- Inappropriate or unpredictable emotional responses.
- Quit doing routine behaviors like bathing, dressing themselves, and brushing their teeth.

A person with hebephrenic schizophrenia is likely to have a difficult time beginning a specific task or finishing a task. Independent functioning is exceptionally difficult because of this gross disorganization. People with hebephrenic schizophrenia have a flat affect, which means they can show little or no emotions in their facial expressions, voice tone, or mannerisms. They can often have inappropriate reactions to things and situations.

There are medications and physiotherapy to try and help with the symptoms. There are also things like life skills training and family education classes for support.

Catatonic Schizophrenia

Catatonic schizophrenia is an exceedingly rare severe mental disorder typically involving either significant reductions in voluntary movement or hyperactivity and agitation. Sometimes the patient may remain in a state of almost complete immobility in statue like positions. It affects the way you move in extreme ways. People with catatonic schizophrenia might stay totally still and mute, or be hyperactive for no reason. This can last for minutes, hours, or in extreme cases, even days. Catatonic schizophrenia is no longer an alone diagnosis because it can happen with not only schizophrenia but sometimes mood disorders, autism, and even other conditions, but it is mainly shown with schizophrenia.

Symptoms Of Catatonic Schizophrenia:

The symptoms for this illness can be very severe and easily noticeable.

- Not being able to talk.
- Not being able to react, or little reaction to things around you.
- Being agitated or hyperactive for no reason.
- Holding limbs up in uncomfortable positions for a long time.
- Mimicking someone else's speech.
- Staring or spacing out frequently.
- Seizures with a rigid body.
- Odd and exaggerated movements.

There are many forms of diagnosis for catatonic schizophrenia like EEGS, MRIS, cat scans and physical exams.

Undifferentiated Schizophrenia

Undifferentiated schizophrenia is a type of schizophrenia that is diagnosed when someone meets the criteria for a diagnosis of schizophrenia, but cannot be classified into any of the defined subtypes. People who are diagnosed with undifferentiated schizophrenia show symptoms of more than one type of schizophrenia. These symptoms will be a mix of some of the symptoms of anywhere from two types of schizophrenia to five. It is extremely hard to get much information on this type of schizophrenia; because there is a mixture of different symptoms, it cannot be classified as one of the main types of schizophrenia. So undifferentiated schizophrenia also interferes with their perception with reality.

Residual Schizophrenia

People with residual schizophrenia have a history of at least one episode of schizophrenia, but the person will currently have no positive symptoms. Symptoms may represent a transition between a full-blown episode and complete remission or may continue for years without any further psychotic episodes. It is a lifelong diagnosis and will never go away, but there is medication to help control it.

Unspecified schizophrenia

Unspecified schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, this category is used when symptoms cause significant distress in someone's life but do not meet full criteria for any of the disorders in the schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders classification.

It is extremely hard to get information on these three diagnoses because they have a mix of more than one diagnosis or not enough symptoms for a full diagnosis and are hard to get individual information on them.

Autism and Schizophrenia

Autism is a very different diagnostic entity from schizophrenia, but they do share many clinical features. People with Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder have higher levels of autistic symptoms. Until a century ago, autism was considered an early expression of schizophrenia, but current studies have shown these conditions are separate. Even though they have many similar symptoms, studies show shared genetic risk factors and a genetic overlap between the two disorders. 20%-50% of people with childhood onset schizophrenia met criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder. Distinguishing the difference between the two is extremely hard because the two have so many similar symptoms. Very few specialists know how to tell if someone has autism and schizophrenia, they usually just decide on one of them. The main symptom that people with schizophrenia have that people with autism do not is the hallucinations. But not everyone with

schizophrenia hallucinates. Again, young children have imaginary friends, and so when someone with autism has imaginary friends it is very hard to tell the difference between the two. They have now discovered that the cause of the paranoia is different for each disorder.

Both autism and schizophrenia can not be tested by blood work, MRIs, or cat scans so they will sometimes do these tests to make sure there is no physical illnesses to cause these symptoms. To test for schizophrenia, they will do a psychological evaluation and complete a medical exam. With autism they will look at the child's developmental history and behavior, and doctors rely on listening to the concerns of their parents. Autism has a very wide range of symptoms. Some people who are on the spectrum can have severe mental disabilities.

One of the biggest differences between autism and schizophrenia is that autism can be diagnosed and see symptoms during very early childhood years, and schizophrenia symptoms do not typically appear until early adulthood at the earliest.