

# Six developmental trajectories ID'd in children with autism

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(HealthDay) -- Six longitudinal developmental trajectories have been identified among children with autism, with significant heterogeneity seen in developmental pathways within these trajectories, according to a study published online April 2 in *Pediatrics*.

Christine Fountain, Ph.D., of Columbia University in New York City, and colleagues described the typical longitudinal developmental trajectories of 6,975 children with autism (aged 2 to 14 years) who were enrolled with the California Department of Developmental Services. Nine items for social, communication, and repetitive behavior functioning were evaluated to construct a score sequence. Using group-

based latent trajectory modeling, typical trajectories were identified and the odds of classification within each trajectory were assessed.

The researchers identified six typical patterns of social, communication, and [repetitive behavior](#) functioning. Significant [heterogeneity](#) was seen in developmental pathways within these trajectories, and children whose symptoms were least severe at first diagnosis had a tendency to improve more quickly than those who were more severely affected. One group, representing about 10 percent of children, experienced rapid gains, transitioning from severely affected to high functioning. There was a correlation between [socioeconomic factors](#) and trajectory outcomes; high levels of functioning were more likely among children with non-Hispanic, white, well-educated mothers, and rapid gains were unlikely among [minority children](#) with [intellectual disabilities](#) or less-educated mothers.

"It is important to observe the developmental pathways children with autism follow over time to understand the pace and timing of changes," the authors write. "More work is needed to discover whether these longitudinal patterns will help us not only to understand the diversity of autism but also to better target interventions and improve treatment."

**More information:** [Abstract](#)  
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