Revised checklist improves detection of autism in toddlers

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(HealthDay)—The Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers, Revised with Follow-up (M-CHAT-R/F) is an effective screening tool for autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) in low-risk toddlers, according to research published online Dec. 23 in *Pediatrics*.

Diana L. Robins, Ph.D., of Georgia State University in Atlanta, and colleagues used the M-CHAT-R/F to screen 16,071 toddlers at 18-month and 24-month well-child care visits. M-CHAT-R/F uses an algorithm based on three risk levels and is intended to reduce age of diagnosis and hasten early intervention.

The researchers found that the M-CHAT-R/F was reliable and valid. Children scoring 3 or higher at initial screening and 2 or higher at follow-up had a 47.5 percent risk of being diagnosed with ASD and a 94.6 percent risk of having any developmental delay or concern. According to

the report, compared with the original M-CHAT, the revised tool detects ASD at a higher rate and reduces the number of children who need follow-up. In the current study, children received a diagnosis of ASD at an age that was two years earlier than the national median age of diagnosis.

"The M-CHAT-R/F detects many cases of ASD in toddlers; physicians using the two-stage screener can be confident that most screen-positive cases warrant evaluation and referral for early intervention," the authors write.

Several study authors disclosed financial interests in the M-CHAT.

More information: Abstract
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