

Having a relative with epilepsy may increase your risk of being diagnosed with autism

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Having a first-degree relative with epilepsy may increase a person's risk of being diagnosed with autism, according to a study published in the June 15, 2016, online issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

"Other studies have linked the two conditions, however, our study looks specifically at the brothers and sisters and sons and daughters of [people](#) with [epilepsy](#) to determine a possible autism risk in these relatives," said study author Heléne E.K. Sundelin, MD, with University Hospital in Linköping, Sweden.

For the study, researchers looked at a data registry and identified 85,201 people with epilepsy, as well as all of their [siblings](#) (80,511 people) and [offspring](#) (98,534 people). Each person with epilepsy was compared with five people without epilepsy of similar age, sex and from the same county during the same period. The siblings and offspring of those with epilepsy were also compared with siblings and offspring of people without epilepsy. Siblings and offspring who had epilepsy were excluded from the research.

During the average six-year follow-up period of the study, 1,381 of participants with epilepsy and 700 of the people without epilepsy were diagnosed with autism. People with epilepsy were therefore at increased risk of being diagnosed with autism (1.6 percent compared to 0.2 percent), with the highest risk seen in those diagnosed with epilepsy in childhood (5.2 percent).

The study found a 63 percent increased risk of developing autism for siblings and offspring even when the person with epilepsy was excluded. Offspring of mothers had a 91 percent increased risk and offspring of fathers had a 38 percent increased risk.

"The goal is to find out more about how these two diseases may be linked so that treatments may be developed that will target both conditions," said Sundelin.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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