

Editorial

High Risk of Autism Among Siblings

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According to a study of siblings in families with autism, among 664 children who had at least one older sibling with developmental disorder, the average risk of autism was nearly 19 %. Kids with more than one older autistic sibling had an even higher risk of the disorder, i.e. 32%. Although the fact that genes play a key role in autism risk, other environmental factors shared by siblings, like influences in the womb, may be important as well.

On the basis of the above findings, it is recommended that doctors closely monitor younger siblings of autistic children to pick up early signs of the disorder, e.g. an unusually large head circumference or missed milestones in language development and communication skills. Early detection and diagnosis of autism can help children take advantage of therapies of some of its symptoms.

Cited by Alice Park. Health & Science. Time August 29, 2011; 178(8): 15.