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HEALTH CHECK New Test Could Catch Autism Earlier Than Ever

Posted by [Jeanne Sager](#) on September 18, 2012 at 10:20 AM

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Think new parents are already obsessed with milestones? A **new test for autism** that could diagnose kids on the spectrum as young as **6 months** could be the proverbial gamechanger for parents. On the other hand, the **eye test** could be drive parents absolutely bonkers.

The booming scrapbooking industry makes it petty darn clear we are already obsessed with tracking our **kids' milestones**. Add in the most popular stories about autism that pervade the media, telling of a baby who was bright and bubbly only to lose that personality in the toddler years when their developmentally quite suddenly goes off the rails ... and you have parents who hyperfocus on what their kids are doing right as they try to assure themselves their child isn't one of the one in 88 kids to end up on the spectrum.

Those stories we hear have become legendary, but the fact is, there are often [signs of autism](#) in



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younger kids. Still, most kids aren't actually diagnosed until after age 4. It's a heart wrenching waiting game for us parents.

Which is where this test, developed at the University of Southern California and Australia's Queen's University, comes in. The researchers have found they can **track eye movement while a baby watches television** to diagnose everything from Parkinson's disease (typically in older patients) to fetal alcohol syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to autism.

This should be a big help for doctors. Got that, parents? [DOCTORS can use this eye test](#). As in trained professionals who should be able to put this test to use in an office setting to end this endless holding pattern parents are stuck in, wondering if their kid is going to be one of the one in 88. It should help kids **get early intervention** earlier, which is the real key to helping kids on the spectrum.

And yet, the second I read about this, I could see the writing on the wall. Parents are going to try this. And they're going to drive themselves crazy.

This eye test for autism has the potential to keep parents glued to their baby's side for hours, watching, debating, "Honey, was that a flicker? Is he really looking at the TV or am I just imagining it?"

Can I offer a word of advice? Don't! You're going to take all the fun out of parenting ... and you won't be any further ahead in the long run.

We all want to do what is best for our kids, but this is one time when parents really need to back off and let the experts do their jobs. There is no reason for parents to set their babies up in front a television set and become obsessed with watching their eyes move. Babies shouldn't really be watching TV anyway (ahem), but this is also highly technical stuff. You don't watch a YouTube video and figure out how to diagnose your kid with autism!

Let's call this possible test for autism what it is: something that could help the experts help us. But let's all agree to leave it to them, OK?

Have you been concerned about autism? What have you done?

Image via [n8tr0n/Flickr](#)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeanne Sager writes articles for *The Stir* by day, slays closet monsters and bounds through bedtime stories with her elementary schooler by night. The *Phineas and Ferb* soundtrack reverberates through her brain. [More](#)

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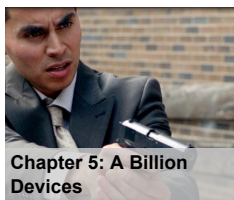
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[Pinkmani](#) on Sep 18, 2012 at 11:04 AM

One of my Autism theories is the toxicity of the products surrounding the baby. The brain of an infant is absorbing so much information. The things that we wash our hands with or rub our baby with were made with chemicals and maybe those chemicals are too strong for a baby causing delays. Johnson & Johnson recently changed the ingredients in their baby products, so maybe they are onto something. Who knows?

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Nonmember comment from [A mom](#) on Sep 18, 2012 at 11:39 AM

Interesting. I hope that it will be a useful tool for doctors to identify at-risk children and get them help earlier. What most parents don't realize is that even if their child is showing symptoms they won't get a diagnosis until later. They can still receive services from Early Intervention in the meantime, which are crucially helpful, but it's very difficult to diagnose autism positively before 3 or 4 because of the fluid nature of a child's development. Instead, the developmental deficits will be identified with testing (speech, cognitive, motor, etc.) and addressed with therapy. Doctors/psychologists generally don't want to give a diagnosis prematurely and have to take it back. So if there are any concerns, a child should absolutely be evaluated by their doctor or early childhood educator but don't expect to get a diagnosis before 3 years of age. (Mom of an autistic son)

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ZAP 2 it



MommietoJB on Sep 18, 2012 at 1:07 PM

I think children get autism because of multiple reasons. Such as enviromental, genetic, exposure to toxins and yes even vaccines. I believe that my autistic son was born with the genetic trait that is prone to autism and somehow toxins from the enviroment and the multiple vaccines he received contributed heavily to him developing autism. I dont think this test would be helpful as most parents I know that have autistic children did not see symptoms til 16 to 18 months. I really hope more research is done, as I would love to be sure of what triggered this epidemic.

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Nonmember comment from **jxsnsmom** on Sep 18, 2012 at 1:24 PM

My HFA son is participating in a research study tracking differences in body and eye movements for earlier testing/detection.

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Nonmember comment from **Beth** on Sep 18, 2012 at 3:56 PM

My son, now almost 5, is one of the ones you knew very early had something wrong. At one week, he stopped being able to suck effectively. He never babbled like babies do. He had his hearing tested multiple times because it was assumed he was deaf. I do believe that an eye test, ***administered by a professional***, could indicate a problem early on.

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Facebook comment from **Harold Rongey** on Sep 19, 2012 at 4:37 PM

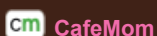
Parents of new born children who are concerned their child may develop autism are advised to consider the adequacy of the diet well before any symptoms are detectable. A recent study accurately predicted that children lacking critical brain nutrients would experience autism more than 95% of the time. Eliminating those nutritional deficiencies offers the greatest hope for prevention of developing autism. Prevention with adequate nutrition is light years better than intervention after the fact.

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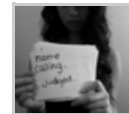
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