



AUTISM IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

This article provides information about autism in children. Autism is a severe mental disorder, an extreme form of self-isolation. It is expressed in withdrawal from contact with reality, poverty of emotional expression. An autistic person is characterized by inadequate response and a deficit of social interaction.

АУТИЗМ У ДЕТЕЙ

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ABSTRACT

В этой статье представлена информация об аутизме у детей. Аутизм тяжелое психическое расстройство, крайняя форма самоизоляции. Выражается в уходе от контактов с действительностью, бедностью выражения эмоций. Аутисту свойственно неадекватное реагирование и дефицит социального взаимодействия.

Introduction. Autism in children is a disease associated with the disruption of the development of certain mental functions, which manifests itself in various difficulties in the child's social interaction with the outside world, obsessive motor habits and other conditions. Most often, the disease is diagnosed in children under 3-4 years old, but the first signs of



deviations in some cases can be noticed already in the first year of life. There is no general treatment for the pathology: specialists develop individual methods for correcting autism in children, based on the condition of a particular patient.

In recent decades, the number of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has increased significantly. Doctors working with such children are confident that the reason for the sharp increase in identified cases was a change in examination criteria, the development of diagnostic methods, and a more thorough study of the problem.

The degree of manifestation of symptoms in autism in children can vary significantly: from a complete inability to interact with other people to certain "oddities" in behavior, such as obsessive movements, a too narrow range of interests, or an unusual manner of speech.

Boys are more prone to autism spectrum disorder: they encounter the disease two to three times more often than girls. Scientists explain this by the better communication skills of the female sex, which is why mild forms of autism may simply go unnoticed.

The assessment of symptoms, the search for possible causes of autism in children and the correction of ASD signs are carried out in a complex by neuropsychologists, child neurologists, speech therapists, psychiatrists, as well as special education teachers and social services, if necessary.

Theoretical basics. To date, several options for describing childhood autism have been developed, distributing the pathology by type, taking into account certain characteristics and signs. Practitioners prefer to use Nikolskaya's classification, which allows grouping conditions depending on the severity of existing signs, the leading syndrome and the future prognosis. This classification helps to delve into the possible causes of ASD in more detail and select corrective treatment based on the individual characteristics of children with autism.

It involves identifying four main groups.

- The first includes the most significant disorders. Children with such forms of the disease are not capable of social contacts, may suffer from mutism - a condition in which they can talk and understand others, but do not want to interact. This group is characterized by constant repetition of the same movements, lack of self-care skills, low level of self-control.
- The second group includes children who react very vividly and harshly to the slightest changes in the usual routine, sometimes even with strong aggression. At the same time, surrounded by close people in a familiar environment, such children are quite capable of communication, open to dialogue, although they communicate mainly with the help of clichés and repetition of what another person said.
- The third group includes young patients who have problems communicating with the outside world, but at the same time they have high intellectual abilities, strive for success and goal achievement. The problem is that such children, unlike healthy peers, do not make any efforts to achieve results. Children with autism of this degree focus on one or two interests, studying topics so deeply that the level of knowledge can be assessed as encyclopedic.
- The fourth group includes children capable of voluntary and involuntary communication, establishing social contacts and interaction, but such children quickly get tired of communication, following instructions, cannot concentrate on one activity for a long time, and tend to isolate themselves from society. Often, children with this level of ASD look



too timid, shy, and are known as "silent ones", but with timely and competent correction, they show excellent results in their studies and creative activities.

It is impossible to fit all the characteristics of children with autism into any specific scheme, and even taking into account classifications, it is necessary first of all to start from the individual characteristics of a particular child and his environment.

Reliable causes of the pathology have not yet been found. There are several well-founded theories that consider the condition as a consequence of genetic abnormalities or the result of intrauterine damage to the fetus. The leading direction for study today is the version that there is a certain gene that predisposes to autism. Research is underway that has already shown that the presence of the gene significantly increases the risk of ASD, especially if there are psychoneurological diseases in the family history (epilepsy, delayed speech development, stuttering, etc.).

Other possible causes of autism in children include:

- structural disorders in the brain, manifested by disproportionate maturation, disproportion of certain parts, for example, the frontal lobe, cerebellum;
- functional disorders of the brain associated with attention deficit, memory impairment, speech impairment, etc.;
- disruptions in biochemical processes, in which there is increased production of some substances and insufficient synthesis of others (in particular, studies have shown that children with autism spectrum disorders have increased levels of serotonin, while proteins and gluten are not absorbed by the body or are poorly absorbed).

Factors that may increase the likelihood of developing childhood autism in the presence of a predisposition gene and other underlying causes are:

- difficult childbirth with complications, fetal hypoxia, uterine bleeding, etc.;
- infections suffered by the child during the intrauterine period of development;
- gestational diabetes of pregnant women;
- irrational use of antiepileptic drugs during pregnancy;
- depressive states of the expectant mother and other psychiatric illnesses;
- drug addiction of the parent.

There is a misconception that vaccination against dangerous infectious diseases also increases the risk of developing autism due to the components included in the vaccine. This opinion was first expressed in the 90s of the twentieth century, but it has not yet been confirmed. Moreover, numerous studies conducted over the years have shown that there is no connection between immunization of children or expectant mothers and the development of autism.

Autistic children prefer to be alone, do not participate in group activities, and it is difficult to make them do something together with other children. They try to leave, hide where they will not be bothered. Such children invent their own games, incomprehensible to their peers, and constantly play them. To those around them, the movements of an autistic child may seem strange, meaningless.

In many TV series and films that show the lives of people with ASD, autistic heroes are presented as strange but brilliant characters who avoid communication, offend others with their directness, but show excellent results in their professional activities. In life,



unfortunately, everything is not so: most often, children with autism develop mental retardation due to a violation of the functions of the cerebral cortex. They have difficulty learning, they are unable to understand patterns, learn rules, or delve into solving a problem. Due to problems with learning, the desire for loneliness and isolation intensifies. Such children can show immoderate aggression, which is most often projected onto loved ones or themselves. Children with autism can bite, cut themselves, or hit themselves against foreign objects when they fail.

However, situations in which autistics have unique mental abilities also occur. Unfortunately, high intelligence does not cover up other manifestations of the disease: isolation, emotional poverty, difficulties with abstract thinking, a tendency to self-flagellation, etc.

The main crisis peak occurs in adolescence: hormonal changes in the body exacerbate autism spectrum disorders, the child, realizing that he is not like everyone else, becomes even more withdrawn. In rare cases, the opposite process occurs, when puberty helps the autistic person become calmer, more balanced, which has a positive effect on the ability to interact with others.

The diagnosis is made on the basis of long-term observation of a child with signs of autism, while the degree of severity of the classic triad of the disease is assessed:

- deficit of social interaction;
- lack or insufficiency of communication skills;
- stereotypical behavior (obsessive movements, habits, etc.).

To determine the severity of symptoms, parents are asked to fill out special questionnaires. They help specialists evaluate the child's behavior, identify specific symptoms characteristic of a particular group of diseases, and analyze the available indicators.

Subsequently, a complex of instrumental examinations is carried out, which includes:

- electroencephalography;
- ultrasound examination of the brain (possible only if the large fontanelle is not closed);
- magnetic resonance imaging of the brain.

A consultation with an audiologist, ophthalmologist, ENT specialist, as well as a speech therapist and neurologist is mandatory.

The pathology is not curable, and there are no drugs that can completely normalize the behavior of an autistic person. Currently, complex therapy is used, which includes a whole list of specialized measures that help children with various forms of ASD.

It involves the following areas:

- psychological support aimed at social adaptation of the child, teaching skills of interaction with the outside world, working through problems with communication and recognizing the emotional state of other people;
- pedagogical training aimed at expanding vocabulary, developing skills in using various tools of spoken language, developing abstract thinking;
- instilling self-care skills that are necessary for autistic children to comfortably and safely stay in society;



➤ medication support aimed at correcting certain behavioral deviations, in particular, unmotivated aggression, increased anxiety, suspiciousness, obsessive-compulsive disorder, sleep disorders, hysterics, etc.

There is no specific prevention against autism. To reduce the risk of having children with autism spectrum disorders, specialists recommend:

- not taking psychotropic, anticonvulsant and other drugs of similar action without the knowledge and prescription of a doctor;
- giving up drugs and other harmful addictions;
- taking good care of your health during the stages of pregnancy planning and during pregnancy.

It is highly advisable to avoid any contact with infectious patients during pregnancy, regularly undergo routine examinations and not attempt to self-medicate any diseases.

Conclusion. The correct diet also plays a role in normalizing the condition of children with autism: the peculiarities of biochemical metabolism require choosing a diet for the child that is rich in easily digestible components and devoid of substances that are not perceived by the body, in particular, dairy products, gluten, casein.

As part of the correction, play and occupational therapy, individual and group sessions with psychologists, speech therapists, and teachers can be used. Parents of such children are recommended to conduct home schooling or transfer to specialized classes/schools where teachers and psychologists work who know how to interact with students with ASD.

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