

**Passage 5**

Autism is typically not firmly diagnosed until a child is around 3 years old. For infants at 6 months with a high genetic risk for autism, another potential predictor has been found by noting weak head and neck control.

Researchers suggest adding the early test of motor skills to existing behavioral screenings for the risk of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The test involves a "pull-to-sit" task, in which the infant is expected to maintain head alignment when being carefully yet firmly pulled by the arms from lying flat on its back to sitting up. The test can reveal a lack of postural control in infants that is normally achieved by 4 months old. Infants without postural control exhibit "head lag."

Other studies have found that head lag indicates developmental delays in preterm infants and children with cerebral palsy. But it hadn't been studied in relation to autism.

"Research aimed at improving early detection of autism has largely focused on measurement of social and communication development," said Dr. Rebecca Landa, director of the Center for Autism and Related Disorders at Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore. "However, disruption in early motor development may also provide important clues about developmental disorders such as autism."

The study involved 40 infants at high risk for ASD because a sibling had the disorder. They were tested at 6, 14, 24 months, then checked at 30 to 36 months for autism. Ninety percent of infants diagnosed with ASD at that point had exhibited head lag as infants.

156. The present study is mainly about .....

- identifying early signs of autism
- detecting preventive measures against autism
- why autism is more prevalent in some families
- what the main cause of autism might be

157. The test in question is based on .....

- learning assessments
- social communication skills
- the evaluation of motor skills
- language developmental delays

158. The inclusion criterion for the participants was coming from families who had already .....

- an autistic parent
- been tested for autism
- a 4 to 36 month old baby
- given birth to an autistic

159. In pull-to-sit test, special attention is paid to .....

- head lag
- lying posture
- preterm infants
- limbs' control

160. The study findings are significant as they ..... for the first time.

- define head lag
- point to head alignments
- relate head lag with autism
- notice lack of control in infants

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