

# Home Videos Can Reveal Secrets of Autism

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**Visual clues to temporary symptoms, long-term probabilities**



ENLARGE

Photo: Getty Images

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0 COMMENTS

Analyzing home videos could help to distinguish toddlers with temporary autistic

symptoms from those who are likely to develop autism, suggests a study published online in *Early Human Development*.

The first signs of autism normally appear around age 2, but in some children these early symptoms disappear after several months or years, the researchers said. Family videos captured seemingly harmless movement anomalies in infants later diagnosed with autism that weren't found in those with transient autism, the study found.

Unexpectedly, all infants studied made normal eye contact with others and had normal smiling responses, regardless of their later diagnoses, researchers said. Lack of direct eye contact is a hallmark of autism spectrum disorder<sup>[1]</sup>.

Researchers at the Medical University of Graz in Austria analyzed 314 minutes of footage donated to a New York autism research foundation by the families of 18 boys born in Italy between 2004 and 2010. The boys developed autistic symptoms between 12 and 24 months of age.

The videos depicted the infants from birth to 6 months of age, before the onset of autism symptoms. The analysis focused on their spontaneous movements, social behaviors, and early vocalizations, such as laughter and cooing.

Ten of the children were diagnosed with autism between 3.6 and 7 years of age, and eight showed no autistic behaviors after age 3.

The toddlers with transient autism had normal body movements, except for one child later diagnosed with high-functioning autism. In contrast, the children who developed autism all exhibited abnormal movements. These included postural or body stiffness, jerky and irregular limbs, slow fidgety-like actions, and poor head control. Six of the infants with later autism displayed monotonous or repetitious movements, which are unusual at such an early age, researchers said.

Caveat: The study was small and didn't include girls. Some children with transient autism developed tics and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. The families who donated videos were known to one of the researchers.

What do home videos tell us about early motor and socio-communicative behaviours

in children with autistic features during the second year of life—An exploratory study<sup>[2]</sup>

1. [http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/detail\\_autism.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/detail_autism.htm)
2. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26246137>