

About Us

Who: We are studying infants, toddlers, children and adults with autism.

What: Research studies of people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to learn about their abilities and deficits, and how they categorize and solve problems. The studies focus on how individuals think and process information, as well as brain structure and function.

When: Research continues through 2012

Where: Testing takes place at the University of Pittsburgh campus, located five miles from downtown Pittsburgh. Certain portions of the study can be conducted over the phone.



What's Involved

- » Testing (ADOS/ADI-R)
 - » IQ
- Any/All of the following:
- » Paper and pencil test
 - » Test battery examines: sensory motor tasks, memory, visual spatial reasoning, analogical reasoning, numerical operations, attention, language and social cognition
 - » Family history interviews
 - » Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI/fMRI): a painless way to take pictures of your brain
 - » Eye movement tracking
 - » Genetic Analysis

Eligible participants will be compensated for the tests they complete. Travel and accommodations for out of town participants will be scheduled and paid for by the study.



Early Autism Studies

The Pitt Early Autism Studies (PEAS) for infants and toddlers are seeking to understand how autism begins, how we can diagnose it earlier and how young nonverbal children with autism think. All PEAS participants receive diagnostic testing for autism. If eligible, we encourage families to participate in both infant studies.

How Babies Develop Intellectually

This research study examines face and object processing. Infants visit the University of Pittsburgh campus at 6, 11, 16, 24, 36, and 48 months of age to watch pictures and movies, and have development tests. Infants must have an older sibling with or without an autism spectrum disorder.

How Babies Communicate

This research study examines communication and motor skills. We visit families at home monthly from 5-14 months of age, with follow-up visits at 18, 24, and 36 months. Infants are observed engaging in everyday activities and play. Families must have an older child with autism and live within 150 miles of Pittsburgh.

Early Autism Study for Toddlers

This research study examines visual processing. Children visit the University of Pittsburgh to watch pictures and movies and have development tests. This study is open to children who are not yet speaking in full sentences who are ages 1-3 with autism, ages 1-2 without autism or ages 1-17 with diagnosed developmental delays other than autism.



Child and Adult Studies

Project I - Ages 5-45

This research project is studying how autism impacts an individual's ability to process cognitive information. More specifically, we are investigating how individuals with high functioning autism learn about the world, including their knowledge of objects, categories and people.

Project II - Ages 5-45

This research project is studying how the brain processes emotions. We use functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to take pictures of the brain while the participant is thinking. We use an eye-tracking device to better understand how people perceive, understand, experience and express emotions. In addition, we want to find out how well people are able to use emotion to make decisions and social judgments.

Project III - Ages 16-45

This research project is studying the brain structure and function in autism through the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). Participants are asked to do activities such as look at pictures and read short stories while in the MRI machine.



The Autism Center of Excellence (ACE), one of six centers funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is dedicated to understanding the underlying nature of autism. This research study is under the direction of Nancy J. Minshew, MD, an internationally recognized expert in autism.

Dr. Minshew is working with a team of scientists from the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University and Duquesne University to search for the cognitive, neurological and genetic basis of autism.



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Help us to further
understand autism

