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AUTISM, ADHD LINKED TO ALLERGY, DISEASES

New research has concluded there are significant links between allergies and autoimmune diseases, and autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Researchers looked at the medical records of 1,386,260 children in Taiwan for the study.

Links run in families

The research focused on links between a child's first-degree relative – such as a mother, father, brother or sister – who had an autoimmune disease or allergy, and autism or ADHD in the child.

Autoimmune diseases include rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis, type 1 diabetes, celiac disease and psoriasis. These diseases occur when the immune system mistakenly attacks parts of the human body.

The researchers also explored autoimmune diseases and allergies in the children themselves, and their links to autism and ADHD.

They found the links were stronger to mothers who had an autoimmune disease or allergy, than to fathers.

Theory of 'peripheral immune cells'

Dr Li Dian-Jeng, of Taiwan's Kaohsiung Municipal Kai-Syuan Psychiatric Hospital, led the study.

His team said they believe "peripheral immune cells" are able to cross the blood-brain barrier. The cells then alter the function of the brain and increase the risk of autism and ADHD.

They found significant links to autism from most allergies, such as asthma and dermatitis, in the child or their mother, father or siblings.

Lupus in a sibling was also "significantly" linked to autism, they concluded.

However, the study found links between autism and most autoimmune diseases to be insignificant.

Stronger link with ADHD

ADHD, in contrast, had a stronger connection to autoimmune diseases in a parent, sibling or the child than autism.

And there were also significant links to ADHD in the child if the mother had an allergy.

Previous genetic studies have pointed up links between ADHD and conditions such as juvenile arthritis and lupus. The latter causes problems with the skin, joints and organs.

The researchers say children who have a parent with an autoimmune disease or allergy should have an assessment for autism and ADHD.

Links to allergies known 'for years'

Researcher says: "This study found the links between allergies and autoimmune diseases in families have been known for years."



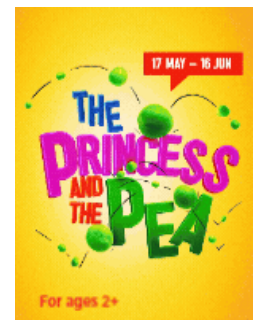
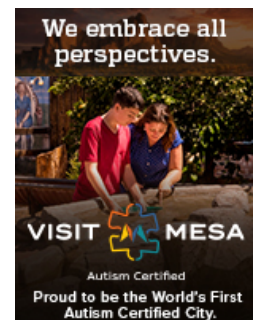
New research has found significant links between allergies and some autoimmune diseases, and autism and ADHD

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Biomedical charity Thinking Autism said the links to immune and allergy problems in families have been known "for years, if not decades".

In a statement, the charity said it was "good to see further confirmation, and especially from a study conducted on such a large database".

The charity said it wants the findings to translate into "action towards early screening and treatments".

The new research appeared in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

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