**SYMPTOMS DIFFERENTIATING INFANTS & TODDLERS WITH AUTISM FROM TYPICAL AND DEVELOPMENTALLY DELAYED PEERS**

***Adapted from Tom Clingan & Fred Volkmar***

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|  | **SOCIAL INTERACTION** | **COMMUNICATION** | **STEREOTYPICAL BEHAVIORS & REPETITIVE PATTERNS** |
| **1ST YEAR OF LIFE** | Limited ability to anticipate being picked upLow frequency of looking peopleLittle interest in interactive gamesLittle affection toward familiar peopleContent to be alone  | Poor response to nameInfrequent looking at objects held by others | Excessive mouthing of objectsAversion to social touch |
| **2ND & 3RD YEARS\*** | Abnormal eye contactLimited social referencing (low frequency of looking referentially at parents)Limited interest in other childrenPreference for behind aloneLimited social smileLow frequency of looking at peopleLimited range of facial expressions and infrequent sharing of affectLimited sharing of affect/enjoymentLittle interest in interactive games (social games, turn-taking)Limited functional playNo pretend playLimited motor imitation | Low frequency of verbal or nonverbal communicationFailure to share interest (e.g. through pointing, giving, and showing)Poor response to nameFailure to respond to communicative gestures (e.g., pointing, giving, and showing)Use of others’ body as toolUnusual vocalizations | Hand and finger mannerisms (begin to emerge around 3 years)Inappropriate use of objectsRepetitive interests/play (begin to emerge around 3 years)Unusual sensory behaviors (hyper or hyposensitivity to sounds, textures, taste, visual stimuli) |

\*20%-40% of children with autism experience loss of language skills, decreased interest in usual activities, and withdrawal from social interactions between 18-24 months.

About 30%-50% of parents of children diagnosed with autism report their first concerns before child’s first birthday and at least 80%-90% recognize abnormalities by 24 months.

Symptoms in children with autism intensify with time during preschool years. At the same time, in children with developmental delays, some of the autistic-like behaviors observed early in development appear to diminish in ferqune3cy and intensity, allowing for clearer discrimination between the groups,

DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for autism have good sensitivity and specificity when applied for children 4 years and older but may have limited use for younger children, especially below age 3 years (e.g., failure to develop peer relationships, impaired conversational skills, and stereotyped language are not usually applicable to children under 3 years, and children under 3 years display fewer symptoms from the stereotyped and repetitive behaviors domain).

REF: Chawarska K & Volkmar FR Autism in infancy & early childhood. In Volkmar FR et al (ed) Handbook of Autism & Pervasive Developmental Disorders, 3rd ed. John Wiley, 2005.