

Autism Spectrum Disorder Characteristics in Prader-Willi Syndrome

Some recent studies have indicated that autistic-like characteristics may be more common in Prader-Willi syndrome. The three core characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) include the following:

- Poor or unusual social interaction skills
- Delayed development or difficulties in verbal and non-verbal (gestures, pointing, showing etc.) communication
- The presence of repetitive behaviours

It is very important to take the person's level of intellectual disability into consideration when thinking about a diagnosis of ASD. This is particularly important for young children with Prader-Willi syndrome where it may become even more difficult to accurately assess the presence of ASD characteristics. This is because difficulties associated with having an intellectual disability can sometimes look similar to ASD characteristics.

Using data from published studies looking at autism symptoms in individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome, Veltman et al (2005) concluded that 38% of children had co-occurring ASD. All of these children had Prader-Willi syndrome due to maternal uniparental disomy, which is where both copies of chromosome 15 come from the mother.