

Best Practice Guidelines for Screening and Diagnosing Autism in Young Children

The American Academy of Neurology and the Child Neurology Society Quality Standards Subcommittee published practice parameters for screening and diagnosing autism in young children (Filipek et al., 2000). These guidelines are helping practitioners to recognize or suspect autism in children based on abnormal social and communication development at earlier ages.

The committee recommended two levels of assessment:

LEVEL 1:

Routine developmental surveillance and screening of autism for all children to identify those at risk for autism or any type of atypical development;

- **Further screening if:**
 - ✓ **No babbling by 12 months**
 - ✓ **No gesturing by 12 months**
 - ✓ **No single words by 16 months**
 - ✓ **No 2-word phrases by 24 months (spontaneous and not echolalic)**
 - ✓ **Loss of language or social skills (at any age)**
- Use some formal screening tool for autism (e.g., CHAT, Baron-Cohen et al., 1992)

Children who fail a screening at level one would be referred for further assessment following the guidelines established for level two.

LEVEL 2:

Diagnosis and evaluation to differentiate autism from other developmental disorders. See [separate toolkit page on Diagnosing Autism](#)

Clinical Practice Algorithm

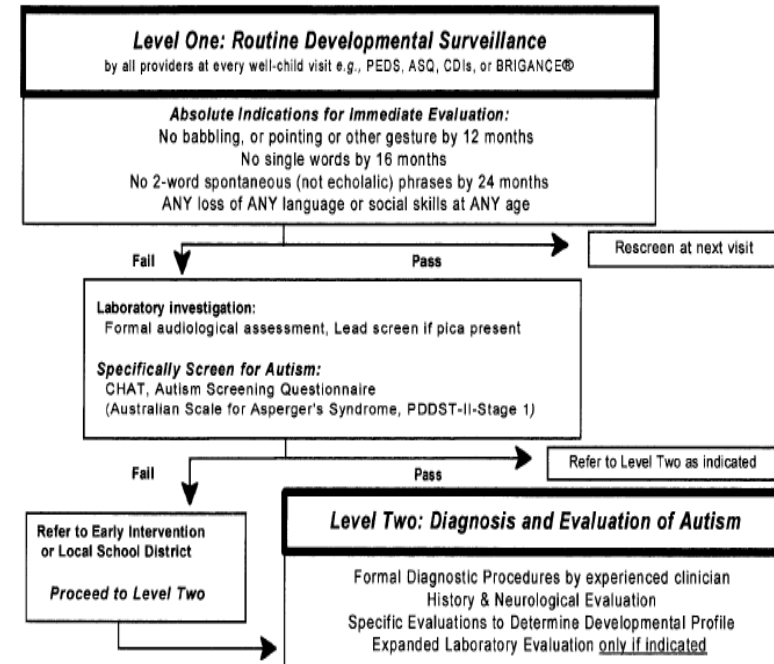


Figure. Practice parameter algorithm.

<http://www.neurology.org/cgi/content/abstract/55/4/468>

Best Practice Guidelines for Screening Resources and Information

Websites:

American Academy of Pediatrics

The Pediatrician's Role in the Diagnosis and Management of Autistic Spectrum Disorder in Children
<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;107/5/1221>

American Academy of Neurology

Practice parameter: Screening and diagnosis of autism

Report of the Quality Standards Subcommittee of the American Academy of Neurology and the Child Neurology Society
<http://www.neurology.org/cgi/content/abstract/55/4/468>

American Academy of Pediatrics

Counseling Families Who Choose Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Their Child With Chronic Illness or Disability
<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/pediatrics;107/3/598>

Articles:

Filipek, P.A., Accardo, P. J., Ashwal, S., et al. (2000). Practice parameter: Screening and diagnosis of autism: Report of the Quality Standards Committee of the American Academy of Neurology and the Child Neurology Society. *Neurology*, 55, 468-479.

American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Children with Disabilities (2001). Technical report: The pediatrician's role in the diagnosis and management of autism spectrum disorder in children. *Pediatrics*, 107 (5), 1221-1226.

Prelock, P. A. & Contompasis, S .H. (In Press). Autism and related disorders: Trends in diagnosis and neurobiologic considerations. In P. A. Prelock, Autism Spectrum Disorders: Communication Assessment and Intervention. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

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