

The Terrible Teens - Dealing with Autistic Teenagers

For most parents, one of the most trying times in their lives is during their child's teenage years. When puberty hits, young adults go through serious changes in their bodies and minds, and parents have little or no control over many situations. In an autistic child, puberty is no different. Although your autistic child is not experiencing puberty in quite the same ways as others his or her age, major hormonal changes still occur in the body. This can lead to extreme results, and this can be either good or bad depending on how your child reacts to the new hormone levels.

One of the scariest side effects of changes in an autistic person's body is the onset of seizures. Many autistic individuals experience seizures from birth to adulthood, but even if your child does not suffer from these episodes, he or she may begin to experience seizures during puberty and afterwards, due to the new levels of hormones in the body. Strange as it may sound, violent shaking seizures are not necessarily a bad thing. Almost a quarter of autistic children experience seizures, but many go undetected because they are not textbook versions of seizures. If you recognize that your child is experiencing a seizure, you can do something about it, and doctors will be able to better treat your child. However, if the seizures are subconsciously happening, you and your child may not realize it. The result of these small hidden seizures can be a loss in function, which can be devastating, especially if your child was improving before puberty. Regular check-ups during puberty, therefore, are extremely important.

The changes might not necessarily be a bad thing. New hormone levels in the body and the other changes associated with puberty might help your autistic child grow and succeed in areas in which he or she normally had no skill or interest. Many parents report that their child's behavior improved, and that learning in social settings was easier.

The important thing about puberty is to learn to monitor the changes in your child very carefully and to ask your doctor lots of questions. Remember that puberty is a difficult experience for any young adult, and so it will be even more difficult for someone with autism. Try to practice patience and understanding with your teen, and be careful to regulate his or her autism so that the transition from child to adult will go more smoothly.