

# Birth Defect Fact Sheet

Birth Defect Research for Children

## Childhood Disintegrative Disorder

### What is Childhood Disintegrative Disorder?

Children with Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD) develop normally until age 3 or 4 when they start to lose previously acquired social, language and motor skills. This can happen over a period of months. CDD is sometimes called Heller Syndrome and is part of the larger category Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Most children with this condition regress until they have permanent impairment similar to a ten-year-old child with severe autism. The cause of CDD is not known.



**BIRTH DEFECT RESEARCH  
FOR CHILDREN, INC**

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## What causes CDD?

Although the cause of Childhood Disintegrative disorder is not known, some studies suggest that genetic predisposition triggered by environmental factors during pregnancy may cause CDD. Other researchers believe that altered immune responses may cause the pattern of CDD symptoms.

## How many children have CDD?

Childhood Disintegrative Syndrome occurs in about 2 per 100,000 children.

## What are the symptoms of CDD?

Children with CDD show a loss of previously acquired skills in two or more of the following areas:

- Language- child loses the ability to speak and communicate with others
- Social skills – child is unable to form relationships with family members and other children
- Play – child loses interest in playing with toys, games and other activities
- Motor Skills – child loses the ability to walk, climb, hold objects or perform other movements
- Bowel and/or bladder control – child may have frequent accidents even though they had been toilet trained

## How is Childhood Disintegrative Disorder Diagnosed?

You should see your doctor if your child starts to lose previously acquired skills in at least

two areas of development that were previously normal for age. Your doctor will take a careful history and may order special testing.

## What's is the future for a child with CDD?

Children with CDD usually end up functioning at the level of a 10-year-old child with severe autism. Treatment is the same as for a child with severe autism. This may include medications and behavioral therapy as well as physical therapy for motor skills impairment.

## Fact Sheet by:

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for Children, Inc.**

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