

# Children of parents in technical jobs at higher risk for autism

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Children of fathers who are in technical occupations are more likely to have an autism spectrum disorder, according to researchers at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth).

The findings will be presented Friday at the International Meeting for Autism Research in Atlanta.

During participation in the LoneStar LEND program, first author Aisha S. Dickerson, Ph.D., a researcher at UTHealth's Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences, used the United States government's Standard Occupational Classification system. Parents were divided into those who had more non-people-oriented jobs (technical) or more people-oriented jobs (non-technical).

Fathers who worked in engineering were two times as likely to have a child with an [autism spectrum disorder](#) (ASD). Those who worked in finance were four times more likely and those who worked in health care occupations were six times more likely to have a child on the autism spectrum.

There was no association with a mother's occupation. However, children who had both parents in technical fields were at a higher risk of having a more severe form of autism.

"Parental occupation could be indicative of autistic-like behaviors and preferences and serve as another factor in a clinician's diagnosis of a child with suspected autism. Medical students can be taught that this is one of the things to consider," Dickerson said.

Senior author of the paper, "Role of Parental Occupation in Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis and Severity," is Pauline A. Filipek, M.D., professor and director of the Autism Center at the UTHealth Medical School's Children's Learning Institute. UTHealth co-authors include

Deborah Pearson, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences; Katherine Loveland, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and professor at The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston; and Mohammad Hossein Rahbar, Ph.D., director of the Division of Clinical and Translational Sciences in the Department of Internal Medicine and professor of epidemiology and biostatistics in the UTHealth School of Public Health.

**More information:** [www.autism-insar.org/](http://www.autism-insar.org/)

Provided by University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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