

Detect learning disabilities early: Expert

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Chennai: Parents are often so blind with their love for their children that they overlook, and sometimes find as cute, problems in them. Autism and learning disabilities should not be taken so lightly, warn experts.

If a child has problems with speaking and language even when he is three years old or appears uninterested in social activity or does not show interest in toys, parents should consult doctors to see if the child is suffering from learning disabilities or autism. This was the advice from experts from across the world, who congregated in the city on Wednesday for a two-day conference on early intervention

Help Your Child Cope

► It's important to involve teachers in working with parents towards helping a child handle disability

► If a child has speaking or language problem or appears uninterested in social activity parents should take the child to doctor

► A child's cognitive ability and language are most important factors to predict physical abnormalities



in prevention, care and management of children with mental retardation and associated disabilities.

Talking about pre-school aged mentally disabled children and families, Dr George Baroff from the University of North Carolina said it was important to train teachers and to involve them in planning and working with parents and families towards helping the child handle the disability. "Teachers should keenly note the time spent by children on learning and fun activities to detect signs of retardation at an early stage," he said. He added that a child's cognitive ability and language are most important factors to predict physical abnormalities.

In girl children, lack of facial expression and change in gait could indicate Rett Syndrome, he said, where the child may repeatedly wring her hands and develop gastrointestinal disorders. Rett Syndrome affects the outermost layer of the brain, almost exclusively in girls. Another disorder to watch out for, Dr Baroff said, was Heller's syndrome which causes retardation in language function, social function and motor skills of children. "Teachers ought to be aware of the various syndromes to figure out what the child is suffering from. Educating teachers is the first big step in treating children with developmental disabilities," he said.

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