

FAMILY RESEARCH SUMMARY:

Alpha Agonists often used for treatment of ADHD in Children with Autism and Intellectual Disability

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often also have attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and/or intellectual disability (ID). Medication may be used to treat ADHD. It is not known if a diagnosis of ID changes the medications used for ADHD.

The most common type of medication used to treat ADHD is called a stimulant. Stimulants may have more side effects in children with ID. For this reason, doctors sometimes use another type of medication called alpha agonists (AAs).

In this study, researchers looked at what medications were given at three clinical sites. They looked at the records of 989 children with ASD and ADHD. Of those, 199 (20.1%) also had ID. Children with ID were more likely to be treated with AAs. Children treated with AAs were also younger than those treated with stimulants. Doctors are more likely to treat ADHD with AAs in children with ASD and ID compared to ASD alone. This study does not tell us if AAs work better than stimulants in children with ASD and ID.

Reference:

Grater JE, Muniz EI, Silver EJ, Blum NJ, Shults J, Stein REK. [Treatment of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder with Medication in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder With and Without Intellectual Disability: A DBPNet Study](#). *J Autism Dev Disord*. 2022 May 28. PMID: 35633446