



Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and autism spectrum disorder may share some molecular similarities, a new study of rats suggests.

The findings could help researchers trying to develop new treatments for both disorders, Fox News reports.

Researchers at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago exposed pregnant rats to alcohol, and found their offspring showed symptoms of social impairment and changed levels of genes that have been linked to autism in humans.

Rats exposed to alcohol when pregnant who were given low doses of the thyroid hormone thyroxine showed reductions in some effects of alcohol damage, and a reversal in the production of autism-related genes in their offspring, the article notes.

"The novel finding here is that these two disorders share molecular vulnerabilities, and if we understand those, we are closer to finding treatments," said senior author Eva Redei. Both disorders have symptoms of social impairment, and begin during brain development in the womb, HealthCanal reports.

The study appears in *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*.

Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term used to describe the range of effects that can occur in an individual exposed to alcohol. [Click here to learn more.](#)