

## Worms to understand autism: a hopeful research of scientists in Córdoba

LOCATION: Córdoba

DURATION: 1:42

**SUMMARY:** Knowing the relationship existing between testosterone and the nervous system and their influence in the development of the autistic disorder is the subject investigated by a research group at the Maimonides Biomedical Research Institute in Córdoba. They have studied how the behaviour of the *Caenorhabditis Elegans* worm is influenced by testosterone. These larvae have been chosen as they share an 80 of their genetic information with humans. The first results obtained have proven that an increase of this masculine hormone during pregnancy can be the cause of the development of the autistic disorder in the child.

### VTR

**Ambience:** *"The worm usually goes back..."*

What can these worms teach us about autism? To avoid it even before birth. A group of researchers from Córdoba are using them to study the influence of testosterone in the development of this disorder.

**MARÍA DEL MAR GÁMEZ**  
Researcher IMIBIC

*"The final results have proved that this hormone is able to change the behaviour of the worm."*

**MANUEL RUIZ**  
Professor at the University of Córdoba

*"When the worm grows in the presence of testosterone, for example, it is unable to respond to the touch of an eyebrow hair."*

If the relationship between the increase of the testosterone levels during pregnancy and the changes in the behaviour in the child is proven, the advance in the treatment of this disorder would be huge.

**MANUEL RUIZ**  
Professor at the University of Córdoba

*"Somehow we could avoid those testosterone peaks that can be produced during pregnancy, avoiding the type of autism that could be linked to those characteristics."*

The origin of autism can be genetic or linked to environmental agents that affect parents. That's why they are also checking the influence of these agents in the development of the disorder.

**JAIME OSUNA**  
Researcher at the University of Córdoba

*"A person who is in good shape, who practices sports, who eats healthy, maybe his or her DNA can suffer a series of changes and from having children with a 10% of possibilities, they descend to a 5%."*

Autism affects around three hundred thousand people in Spain. Today these scientists keep researching to get to know its origin to find drugs suitable for its treatment.

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