Dr. Landa: “Autism is a multi-system disorder, it doesn’t just affect the brain, and many people with the Autism there are other body systems affected and sometimes people suffer enormously.”

Dale: “Today on Brain Talk, the importance of early intervention with Autism.”

Dr. Landa: “My name is Rebecca Landa; I’m the Director of Center for Autism and Related Disorders at the Kennedy Krieger Institute.”

Dale: “Dr. Landa studies how autism develops in early years of life. Most parents have concerns at about 18 months.”

Dr. Landa: “What they’re really noticing at that age is usually a language delay and then they notice that their children are doing unusual things, sometimes they’re focusing on wheels of a car or doing funny things with their fingers and also that the children aren’t as responsive as other kids their age, that is they’re not responding to their name like they should, they’re not seeking other out people’s engagement.”

Dale: “It’s a clear sign of Autism, says Dr. Landa, when a child doesn’t engage socially like others do.”

Dr. Landa: “And when other people approach them it’s hard for them to respond in kind… so, what happens is that there doesn’t tend to be the normal to and fro or the normal reciprocity, and they don’t have a lot of insight into other people’s perspectives on things. So, even those that have normal IQs will commit a lot of social faux pas, for example.”

Dale: “It’s important to diagnose autism at as young an age as possible. This is so parents, doctors, and health care workers can intervene, and help improve development.

Dr. Landa uses an example of helping a baby who is too passive.”

Dr. Landa: “This is a disorder of what we call dis-connectivity, that the brain is not wiring itself properly and the long range connections between brain regions are not developing healthily. And so one of things we want to do is give babies, what we call, multi-modal experiences, that is, we are activating the auditory centers with the visual centers with the motor centers and the speech centers, and all of that.”
**Dale**: “In doing this, says Dr. Landa, the baby looks at the person they’re engaged with and hears language, which helps too.

For parents, this kind of intervention doesn’t have to be complicated.”

**Dr. Landa**: “These are simple things that parents do, like singing songs to their baby while they’re moving their baby’s arms or legs. We like to, for example, take them when they’re in a seated position and sort of support them at the hips and then sort of rock their bodies while we sing songs so they’re getting the experience of activating their muscles and hearing language in these simple playful fun routines from an early age. You know but in today’s world a lot of that kind of thing isn’t happening as often as it used to, so we need to remember to make sure we give a proper dose of it.”

**Dale**: “Dr. Landa has developed an interactive set of videos that helps parents detect as early as possible that their child might be autistic. These videos are part of a study she hopes will help establish norms for autism detection.

But for parents who are concerned today about their child, Dr. Landa suggests immediate action.”

**Dr. Landa**: “The two big things they need to do is talk to their pediatrician and to contact their local infants and toddler’s program…. Don’t delay… because early development is very, as I said, malleable, shapeable through simple things that parents and therapists can do, so make that call.”

**Dale**: “To learn more about Dr. Landa’s study and to find out more about the importance of early intervention with autism, log on to brainsciencinstitute.org. I’m Dale Connelly and this is Brain Talk from Johns Hopkins University.”

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**Learn more about Dr. Landa**

**Learn more about The Center for Autism and Related Disorders**

http:www.brainscienceinstitute.org