

# Catatonia in Autism

- 12-20% of autistic individuals will experience catatonia (likely higher)
- In many cases, can be easily medically treated once identified

## Assessment

- Always measure from baseline- caregivers are experts!

## Treatment

- Medical identification and management
  - First line: Lorazepam
  - Second line: Modified ECT
- Therapeutic intervention
  - Speech language therapy, Occupational therapy, Music therapy, sound bathing
  - Reduction of stress
  - Education and validation
  - Environmental considerations
    - Adjust setting (academic/career) demands if needed
- Functional Communication support
  - AAC access

## Call to Action

- ADVOCATE for families experiencing autistic catatonia
- EDUCATE your colleagues
- Who needs to know in your community?
  - Parents
  - Autism groups
  - Developmental Peds
  - ER doctors
  - Therapists
  - Middle/High School teachers
  - Community Services Board staff



Bush-Francis  
Catatonia  
Rating Scale

## Resources



Autistic college student



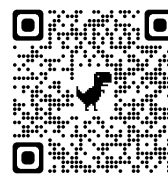
Podcast with autistic OT



Description of autistic catatonia



Association for Science in Autism



AARC Webinar

### **Selected References**

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- Wachtel, L. E. (2019). Treatment of catatonia in autism spectrum disorders. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 139(1), 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acps.12980>

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