

## Alice in Wonderland Syndrome (AIWS)

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### Why in News?

*AIWS is a fascinating but rare perceptual disorder. It's not dangerous, but it can be unsettling.*

- **AIWS** - It is a **rare neurological condition** that causes temporary distortions in how a person observes size, distance, body image, and time.
- **Nomenclature** - It is named after the *children's novel*, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.
- **Described in** - It was formally described in 1955 by **British psychiatrist John Todd**, who noted patients' surreal perceptual distortions while they remained aware of reality.
- Thus, it is also known as ***Todd's Syndrome***.
- **Symptoms**
  - **Duration** - Episodes are usually brief, lasting from a few minutes to about half an hour.
  - Objects appear larger or smaller than reality (micropsia/macropsia).
  - Distorted sense of distance (things seem closer/farther).
  - Altered body image (hands/head feel shrinking or expanding).
  - Distorted time perception (time feels fast or slow).
- **Causes** - It is **not a disease in itself** but a symptom triggered by underlying conditions.
  - **Children** - Most often triggered by **viral infections** (**Epstein-Barr virus**, influenza, varicella, Lyme disease).
  - **Adults** - Commonly linked to migraines (sometimes without headache), temporal lobe epilepsy, certain medications (e.g., dextromethorphan), or brain lesions.
  - **Neurological Basis** - Disruptions in the temporo-parietal-occipital junction, which integrates visual, spatial, and sensory information.
- **Risk** - It can occur at any age, but children recovering from viral infections and adults with migraine aura are most at risk.
- **Diagnosis** - There is **no definitive test**; diagnosis is based on symptom history and ruling out other conditions and supported by MRI/CT scans, EEG and blood tests.
- **Treatment** - There is **no specific treatment**; it focuses on treating the underlying cause. Infections resolve naturally, migraines need preventive care, epilepsy/lesions require targeted therapy, and reassurance is essential.

### Reference

[The Hindu | Alice in Wonderland Syndrome](#)

