**What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?**
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the name for a group of disorders of brain development.
- ASD includes a wide range, “a spectrum,” of symptoms, skills, and levels of disability.
- ASD contains all previous subtypes of autism such as Asperger’s syndrome.

**What are the Symptoms of ASD?**

**Social/Communication Challenges**
This category includes difficulties related to socializing, forming relationships, and communicating with others.
- Getting upset by a slight change in a routine or by overstimulating environments
- Making little or inconsistent eye contact
- Having difficulties with the back and forth of conversations
- Repeating words or phrases that they hear, a behavior called **echolalia**
- Having trouble understanding another person’s point of view or being unable to predict or understand other people’s actions.

**Repetitive Behaviors**
- Repeating certain behaviors or having unusual behaviors. Examples include spinning, hand-flapping, banging head into wall or floor
- Having overly focused interests, such as with moving objects or parts of objects
- Having a lasting, intense interest in certain topics, such as numbers, details, or facts.
- People with ASD may have other difficulties, such as being very sensitive to light, noise, clothing, or temperature.

Although these are not symptoms, ASD is commonly associated with:
- Sleep problems
- Digestive problems
- Irritability
- ADHD
- Seizure disorders

**How common is ASD?**
- As of 2014, 1 in 68 children (1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls) in the United States are diagnosed as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

**How is ASD Diagnosed?**
- Signs of ASD can be detected in infancy, but symptoms become much more noticeable in toddlerhood and early childhood.

**Treatment Options for ASD**
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the following strategies for helping a child to improve overall function and reach his or her potential:

**Behavioral training and management.**
- Behavioral training and management uses positive reinforcement, self-help, and social skills training to improve behavior and communication.
- Many types of treatments have been developed, including Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH), and sensory integration.

**Specialized therapies.**
- Speech, occupational, and physical therapy.
- These therapies are important components of managing autism and should all be included in various aspects of the child’s treatment program.

**Medication.**
- Medication does not cure or treat ASD. However, a doctor may use medication to treat some difficulties that are common with ASD. With medication, a person with ASD may have fewer problems with irritability, aggression, repetitive behavior, hyperactivity, attention problems, and anxiety and depression.

---

**KU Child & Family Services Clinic**
(785) 864-4416
https://kuclinic.ku.edu/