

Autism Spectrum Disorder

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.