

## Signs of Autism

Be aware of the possible red flags your child may show within the first three years of development. Contact your physician if your child displays any of the following behaviors.

- Does not babble, point or make meaningful gestures by 1 year of age.
- Does not speak one word by 16 months
- Does not combine two words by 2 years
- Does not respond to name
- Loses language or social skills

## Some other indicators

- Poor eye contact
- Doesn't seem to know how to play with toys
- Excessively lines up toys or other objects
- Is attached to one particular toy or object
- Doesn't smile
- At times seems to be hearing impaired

(Taken from the National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>)

## Where can I get more Information?

For more information on autism research and Autism awareness groups please contact the follow organizations.

### [Autism Awareness Organizations](#)

#### **Autism Society of America**

7910 Woodmont Ave.  
Suite 300  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Tel: 301-657-0881  
800-328-8476  
Fax: 301-657-0869

<http://www.autism-society.org>

#### **Autism Speaks/ National Alliance for Autism Research**

2 Park Avenue  
11th Floor  
New York, NY 10016  
Tel: 212-252-8584  
CA: 310-230-3568  
Fax: 212-252-8676

<http://www.autismspeaks.org>

### [Autism Research Resources](#)

#### **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Brain Resources and Information Network**

BRAIN  
P.O. Box 5801  
Bethesda, MD 20824  
(800) 352-9424

<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1600 Clifton Rd  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Tel: (404) 498-1515  
(800) 311-3435

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

# Autism



Facts and information on the  
mystery that is autism.

This informational pamphlet was produced and brought by students of the Kathryn W. Davis Global Scholars Program at SUNY Westchester Community college.

## What is Autism?

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. It is part of a group of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Today, 1 in 150 individuals is diagnosed with autism (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), making it more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. It occurs in all racial, ethnic, and social groups and is four times more likely to strike boys than girls. Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe.

(Taken from Autism Speaks,  
[www.AutismSpeaks.org](http://www.AutismSpeaks.org))

## What Causes Autism?

Scientists are not exactly sure what causes autism but it's likely that both genetics and environment play a role. Current research indicates that people with autism have several irregularities in the brain. Other studies also suggest that people with autism have abnormal levels of neurotransmitters in the brain. The research suggests that autism could result from the disruption of normal brain development early in fetal development caused by defects in genes that control brain growth and regulate how neurons communicate with each other.

(Taken from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke,  
[www.Ninds.nih.gov](http://www.Ninds.nih.gov))

## Diagnosis and Consultation

There are no medical tests for diagnosing autism. An accurate diagnosis must be based on observation of the individual's communication, behavior, and developmental levels. However, because many of the behaviors associated with autism are shared by other disorders, various medical tests may be ordered to rule out or identify other possible causes of the symptoms being exhibited. At first glance, some persons with autism may appear to have mental retardation, a behavior disorder, problems with hearing, or even odd and eccentric behavior. To complicate matters further, these conditions can co-occur with autism. However, it is important to distinguish autism from other conditions, since an accurate diagnosis and early identification can provide the basis for building an appropriate and effective educational and treatment program.

A brief observation in a single setting cannot present a true picture of an individual's abilities and behaviors. Parental (and other caregivers' and/or teachers) input and developmental history are very important components of making an accurate diagnosis.

(Taken from Autism Society of America,  
[www.Autism-society.org](http://www.Autism-society.org))

## Early Diagnosis

Research indicates that early diagnosis is associated with dramatically better outcomes for individuals with autism. The earlier a child is diagnosed, the earlier the child can begin benefiting from one of the many specialized intervention approaches treatment and education

(Taken from Autism Society of America,  
[www.Autism-society.org](http://www.Autism-society.org))

## What can be done?

A generation ago, many people with autism were placed in institutions. Professionals were less educated about autism than they are today and specific services and supports were largely non-existent. Today the picture is much clearer. With appropriate services and supports, training, and information, children on the autism spectrum will grow, learn and flourish, even if at a different developmental rate than others.

While there is no known cure for autism, there are treatment and education approaches that may reduce some of the challenges associated with the condition. Intervention may help to lessen disruptive behaviors, and education can teach self-help skills that allow for greater independence. But just as there is no one symptom or behavior that identifies individual with ASD, there is no single treatment that will be effective for all people on the spectrum. Individuals can learn to function within the confines of ASD and use the positive aspects of their condition to their benefit, but treatment must begin as early as possible and be tailored to the child's unique strengths, weaknesses and needs.

(Taken from Autism Society of America,  
[www.Autism-society.org](http://www.Autism-society.org))

Autism is a battle that must be fought on many different fronts. It is very draining emotionally and financially on many families and affects all those around you. Autism receives less than 5% of the research funding of many less prevalent childhood diseases. By donating your time or efforts towards one of the Autism awareness movements you are giving new hope to many families that may feel there is none. The Autism awareness organizations provide support for families with autistic children and also provide funding for Autism research, treatment, and advocacy.