

AUTISM

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are a group of developmental disabilities that can cause significant social communication and behavioral challenges. Individuals with ASDs handle information in their brain differently than other people. ASDs are “spectrum disorders,” which means they affect each person differently and can range from very mild to severe.

Individuals with ASDs share some similar symptoms such as problems with social interaction, but there are differences in when the symptoms start, how severe they are and the exact nature of the symptoms.

Experts estimate the 3 in 6 children out of every 1,000 will have autism. Males are more likely to have autism than females.

Types of ASDs:

Autistic disorder

- » This is what most people think of when hearing the word autism. Individuals with autistic disorder usually have significant language delays, social and communication challenges, and unusual behaviors and interests. Many people with autistic disorder also have intellectual disability.
- » Individuals with Asperger Syndrome usually have some milder symptoms of autistic disorder. They might have social challenges and unusual behaviors and interests. However, they typically do not have problems with language or intellectual disability.
- » Individuals who some of the criteria for autistic disorder or Asperger Syndrome, but not all, may be diagnosed with PDD. Individuals with PDD usually have fewer and milder symptoms than those with autistic disorder. The symptoms might cause only social and communication challenges.
- » Not respond to their name by 12 months
- » Not point at objects to show interest
- » Not play “pretend” games
- » Avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- » Have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings
- » Have delayed speech and language skills
- » Repeat words or phrases over and over
- » Give unrelated answers to questions
- » Get upset by minor changes
- » Have obsessive interests
- » Flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles
- » Have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look or feel

Asperger Syndrome

Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD)

AUTISM *continued*

Signs and symptoms:

ASDs begin before the age of 3 and last throughout a person's life, although symptoms can improve over time. Some children with Autism Spectrum disorders show hints of future challenges within the first few months of life. In others, symptoms might not show up until 24 months or later. Some children seem to develop normally until around 18-24 months of age and then stop gaining new skills, or they lose the skills they previously had.

A child with Autism Spectrum disorders might:

What can I do if I think my child has an Autism Spectrum disorder?

If you think your child might have an ASD or you think there could be a problem with the way your child plays, learns, speaks or behaves, contact your child's doctor and share your concerns. Ask the doctor for a referral to a specialist who can do a more in-depth evaluation of your child. Specialists who can make a diagnosis include developmental pediatricians, child neurologists, child psychologists, and psychiatrists.