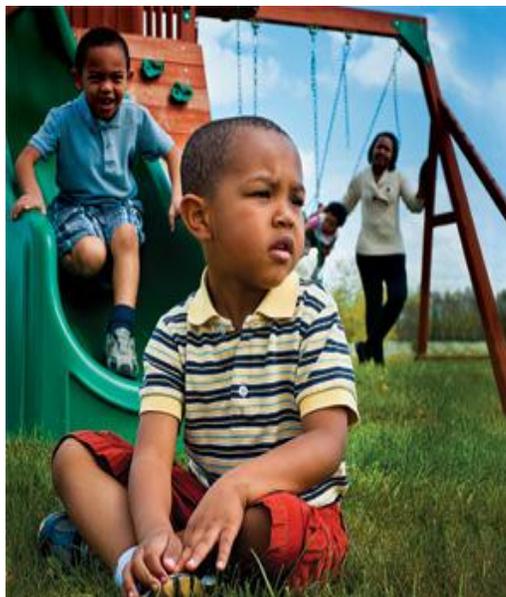


Treatment

There is currently no cure for ASD. However, research shows that early intervention treatment services can improve a child's development. Early intervention services help children learn important skills. Services can include therapy to help the child talk, walk, and interact with others. Therefore, it is important to talk to your child's doctor as soon as possible if you think your child has ASD or other developmental problems.



If You're Concerned

If you think your child might have ASD or you think there could be a problem with the way your child plays, learns, speaks, or acts, contact your child's doctor, and share your concerns.

Even if your child is not yet old enough for kindergarten or enrolled in a public school, call your local elementary school or board of education and ask to speak with someone who can help you have your child evaluated.

Visit our website and facebook page and forward your questions or concerns; or follow our forum discussions.

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Understanding and Living
with Autism Spectrum
Disorder (ASD)

A conversation for parents, and families
living with a loved one with autism

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that affects a child's ability to communicate and interact with others. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged.

A diagnosis of ASD now includes several conditions that used to be diagnosed separately: autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), and Asperger syndrome. These conditions are now all called autism spectrum disorder.

Causes and Risk Factors

We do not know all of the causes of ASD. However, we have learned that there are likely many causes for multiple types of ASD. There may be many different factors that make a child more likely to have an ASD, including environmental, biological and genetic factors.

- Most scientists agree that genes are one of the risk factors that can make a person more likely to develop ASD.
- Children who have a sibling with ASD are at a higher risk of also having ASD.
- ASD tends to occur more often in people who have certain genetic or chromosomal conditions, such as fragile X syndrome or tuberous sclerosis.
- There is some evidence that the critical period for developing ASD occurs before, during, and immediately after birth.

Children born to older parents are at greater risk for having ASD.



- have trouble expressing their needs using typical words or motions
- not play “pretend” games (for example, not pretend to “feed” a doll)
- repeat actions over and over again
- have trouble adapting when a routine changes
- have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound
- lose skills they once had (for example, stop saying words they were using)

Diagnosing ASD can be difficult since there is no medical test, like a blood test, to diagnose the disorder. Doctors look at the child’s behavior and development to make a diagnosis.

ASD can sometimes be detected at 18 months or younger. By age 2, a diagnosis by an experienced professional can be considered very reliable. However, many children do not receive a final diagnosis until much older. This delay means that children with ASD might not get the early help they need.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms and severity vary significantly between individuals. People with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want to change in their daily activities. Many people with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person’s life.

Children or adults with ASD might:

- not point at objects to show interest (for example, not point at an airplane flying over)
- not look at objects when another person points at them
- have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people at all
- avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings
- prefer not to be held or cuddled, or might cuddle only when they want to
- appear to be unaware when people talk to them, but respond to other sounds
- be very interested in people, but not know how to talk, play, or relate to them
- repeat or echo words or phrases said to them, or repeat words or phrases in place of normal language