



## Autism

- As many as one in 88 children are diagnosed with autism
- Reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups
- Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the world, increasing at a rate of 10-17 percent a year
- More people than ever are being diagnosed with autism

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012, National Institutes of Health, 2004, and U.S Department of Education, 1999.

## What exactly is autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or autism is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. Children and adults with autism may find it difficult to relate to other people, may show restrictive and/or repetitive patterns of behavior or body movements.

While great strides are being made, there is no known cause or cure, nor a known singular effective treatment for autism.

The common term of “autism” collectively represents a set of five closely related conditions that fall under the umbrella of Pervasive Developmental Disorders.



## Opening the door to autism

The five developmental disorders that fall under the umbrella and are defined by challenges in three areas: social skills, communication, and behaviors and/or interests.

**Autistic Disorder** – involves moderate to severe impairments in communication, socialization and behavior.

**Asperger Syndrome** - sometimes considered a milder form of autism, Asperger’s is typically diagnosed later in life than other disorders on the spectrum. People with Asperger syndrome usually function in the average to above average intelligence range and have no delays in language skills, but often struggle with social skills and restrictive and repetitive behavior.

**Rett Syndrome** – diagnosed primarily in females who exhibit typical development until approximately five to 30 months when children with Rett syndrome begin to regress, especially in terms of motor skills and loss of abilities in other areas. A key indicator of Rett syndrome is the appearance of repetitive, meaningless movements or gestures.

**Childhood Disintegrative Disorder** – Involves a significant regression in skills that have previously been acquired, and deficits in communication, socialization and/or restrictive and repetitive behavior.

## Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS),

includes children that do not fully meet the criteria for the other specific disorders or those that do not have the degree of impairment associated with those disorders.

## There is hope – autism is treatable

Autism is a life-long disability. And while there is no cause or cure, nor a known singular effective treatment it is treatable. People with autism—at any age—can make significant progress through therapy and treatments, growing to lead meaningful, productive lives.

However, experts agree that early diagnosis and early intervention are critical – because the earlier people with autism get help, the better their outcomes will be in the future.

## Did you know?

The annual cost of providing services for people with autism is \$90 million dollars, in 10 years that number is projected to be \$200-400 billion. With early diagnosis and intervention, the overall cost of treatment can be reduced by two-thirds over an individual with autism’s lifetime. London School of Economics Study, 2001

## Follow your instincts

Parents should get their child screened for autism if:

- They feel something might not “be right” with their child
- Their child isn’t meeting developmental milestones as identified by their pediatrician



## Living with autism

People with autism have challenges in the areas of communication, socialization and restricted/repetitive behaviors. A few examples:

### Communication

Development of language is significantly delayed

Some do not develop spoken language

Experience difficulty with both expressive and receptive language

Difficulty initiating or sustaining conversations

Robotic, formal speech

Repetitive use of language

Difficulty with the pragmatic use of language

### Socialization

Difficulty developing peer relationships

Difficulty with give and take of social interactions

Lack of spontaneous sharing of enjoyment

Impairments in use and understanding of body language to regulate social interaction

May not be motivated by social reciprocity or shared give-and-take

### Restricted and/or Repetitive Behavior

Preoccupations atypical in intensity or focus

Inflexibility related to routines and rituals

Inflexibility related to routines and rituals

Preoccupations with parts of objects

Impairments in symbolic play

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