

## SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH ASD



**What is ASD:** Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental condition that involves persistent challenges in social interaction, speech and nonverbal communication, and restricted/repetitive behaviors. The effects of ASD and the severity of symptoms are different in each person.

**What is autism caused by?** There is no known single cause for autism spectrum disorder, but it is generally accepted that it is caused by abnormalities in brain structure or function. Brain scans show differences in the shape and structure of the brain in children with autism compared to in neurotypical children.

**How is ASD diagnosed?** ASD symptoms can vary greatly from person to person depending on the severity of the disorder. Symptoms may even go unrecognized for young children who have mild ASD or less debilitating handicaps. Autism spectrum disorder is diagnosed by clinicians based on symptoms, signs, and testing according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-V, a guide created by the American Psychiatric Association used to diagnose mental disorders. Children should be screened for developmental delays during periodic checkups and specifically for autism at 18- and 24-month well-child visits.

### Main signs of autism:

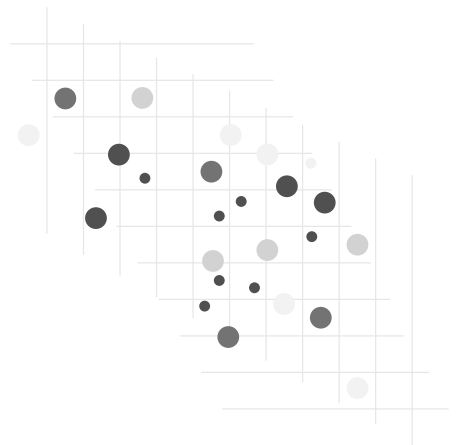
- finding it hard to understand what others are thinking or feeling.
- getting very anxious about social situations.
- finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on your own.
- seeming blunt, rude or not interested in others without meaning to.
- finding it hard to say how you feel.



**Do symptoms of autism change over time?** For many children, symptoms improve with age and behavioral treatment. During adolescence, some children with ASD may become depressed or experience behavioral problems, and their treatment may need some modification as they transition to adulthood. People with ASD usually continue to need services and supports as they get older, but depending on severity of the disorder, people with ASD may be able to work successfully and live independently or within a supportive environment.

**(ASD)Patterns of Behavior:**

- Repetitive behaviors like hand-flapping, rocking, jumping, or twirling.
- Constant moving (pacing) and “hyper” behavior.
- Fixations on certain activities or objects.
- Specific routines or rituals (and getting upset when a routine is changed, even slightly)
- Extreme sensitivity to touch, light, and sound.
- Lines up toys or other objects.
- Likes parts of objects (e.g., wheels)
- Is very organized.

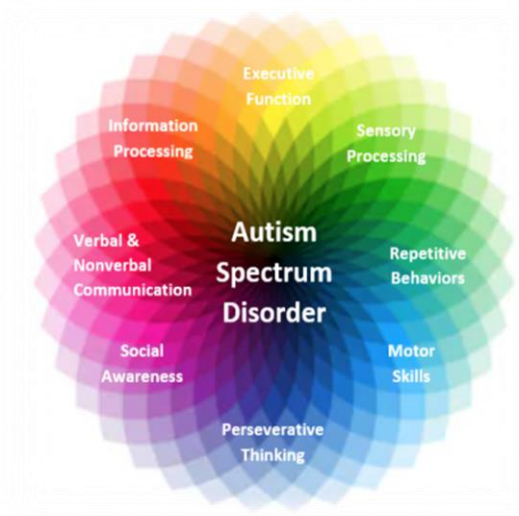


**ASD Sensory Issues:** Children who have sensory issues may have an aversion to anything that triggers their senses, such as light, sound, touch, taste, or smell. Common symptoms of sensory processing issues may include: hyperactivity, frequently putting things in their mouth.

### Sensory Processing Issues Explained:

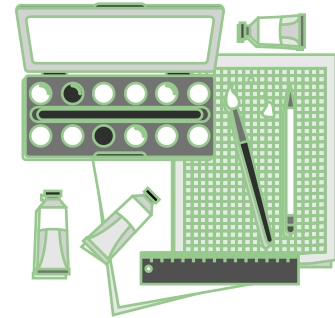
- Screaming if their faces get wet.
- Throwing tantrums when you try to get them dressed.
- Having an unusually high or low pain threshold.
- Walking into walls and even people.
- Putting inedible things, including rocks and paint, into their mouths.

**Is ASD classed as a disability?** Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.



## Common symptoms of autism in adults include:

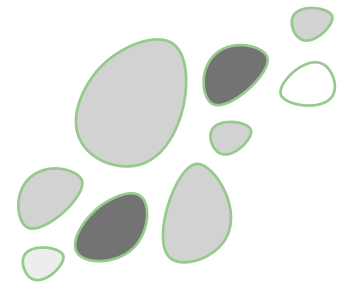
- Difficulty interpreting what others are thinking or feeling.
- Trouble interpreting facial expressions, body language, or social cues.
- Difficulty regulating emotion.
- Trouble keeping up a conversation.
- Inflection that does not reflect feelings.



## How do I get an autism diagnosis for children?

Diagnosing autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be difficult because there is no medical test, like a blood test, to diagnose the disorder. Doctors look at the child's developmental history and behavior to make a diagnosis. ASD can sometimes be detected at 18 months or younger.

**Can autism develop later in life?** The consensus is no, autism cannot develop in adolescence or adulthood. It is, however, common for autism to be missed among girls and people with high-functioning autism when they are young. Because they aren't accurately diagnosed, it might lead to some people believing they developed autism as they matured.





**Ways to Support a Person with Autism:** Knowledge is Power. By educating yourself about autism, you are better prepared to recognise the signs and feel more confident when interacting with someone with autism.

- Building a positive relationship.
- Situational Awareness.
- Supporting Family or Friends That are Caregivers for a Person with Autism.
- Supporting a Co-Worker with Autism.
- Be consistent
- Stick to a schedule
- Create a home safety zone
- Look for nonverbal cues
- Make time for fun
- Pay attention to sensory sensitivities

**A good treatment plan will:**

- Build on current interests.
- Offer a predictable schedule.
- Teach tasks as a series of simple steps.
- Actively engage attention in highly structured activities.
- Provide regular reinforcement of behavior.
- Involve the parents or Carer



**What support is available for people with autism?** There is a range of services available to assist adults on the autism spectrum to live as independently as possible and participate in their community. The available services include respite, individual support package, case management, advocacy, employment services and shared accommodation.

- Child Autism HELPLINE: 01344 882248
- National Autistic Society: 0808 800 4104
- Ambitious about Autism: 020 8815 5444
- Autism Anglia
- Daisy Chain: 01642 531248
- Spectrum: 01326 371 000
- Aspens: 01892 822 168
- Autism East Midlands: 01909 506 678
- Autistica NI: 020 3857 4340

