

# How is Autism Treated?

Each child or adult with autism is unique and as a result, each autism intervention plan should be tailored to address specific needs. Treatment for autism is usually a very intensive, comprehensive undertaking that involves the child's entire family and a team of professionals. Some programs may take place in your home. These may be based in your home with professional specialists and trained therapists or may include training for you to serve as a therapist for your child under the supervision of a professional. Some programs are delivered in a specialized center, classroom or preschool. It is not unusual for a family to choose to combine more than one treatment method.

*The terms "treatment" and "therapy" may be used interchangeably. The word "intervention" may also be used to describe a treatment or therapy.*

We've provided an overview of many different treatment methods for autism in this section of your tool kit. The descriptions are meant to give you general information. Your pediatrician, developmental pediatrician or a social worker who specializes in the treatment of children with autism can make suggestions or help you prioritize therapies based on the strengths and challenges detailed in your child's comprehensive evaluation. Once you have narrowed down some choices of appropriate therapies for your child, you will want to explore more information before making a commitment to one. For many children, autism is complicated by medical conditions, biological issues and symptoms that are not exclusive to autism.

Treatments for associated symptoms address challenges commonly associated with autism, but not specific to the disorder. If your child has biological or medical conditions such as allergies, food intolerances, gastrointestinal issues or sleep disturbances, these will need to be treated too. Treatment programs may combine therapies for both core symptoms and associated symptoms. Your child's treatment program will depend on his or her needs and strengths. Some of these therapies may be used together. For example, if medical causes for sleep disturbances are ruled out, a behavioral intervention might be used to address them. Occupational therapy or speech-language therapy are often integrated into one of the intensive therapy programs described here as core symptom therapies.

**Therapies include a wide range of tools, services and teaching methods that you may choose to use to help your child reach his or her potential. The recommended number of hours of structured intervention ranges from 25 to 40 hours per week during the preschool period.**

Many of the therapy methods described here are very complex and will require more research on your part before you get started. Whenever possible, observe the therapies in action. Talk to experienced parents and make sure you have a thorough understanding of what is involved before beginning any therapy for your child.

## Treatment for the Core Symptoms of Autism

Most families use one type of intensive intervention that best meets the needs of their child and their parenting style. The intensive interventions described here require multiple hours per week of therapy and address behavioral, developmental and/or educational goals. They are developed specifically to treat autism. During the course of treatment, it may be necessary to reevaluate which method is best for your child.