

More Information about Symptoms of Autism

Autism affects the way an individual perceives the world and makes communication and social interaction difficult. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are characterized by social-interaction difficulties, communication challenges and a tendency to engage in repetitive behaviors. However, symptoms and their severity vary widely across these three core areas. Taken together, they may result in relatively mild challenges for someone on the high functioning end of the autism spectrum. For others, symptoms may be more severe, as when repetitive behaviors and lack of spoken language interfere with everyday life.

It is sometimes said that if you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.

While autism is usually a life long condition, all children and adults benefit from interventions, or therapies, that can reduce symptoms and increase skills and abilities. Although it is best to begin intervention as soon as possible, the benefits of therapy can continue throughout life. The long term outcome is highly variable. A small percentage of children lose their diagnosis over time, while others remain severely affected. Many have normal **cognitive skills**, despite challenges in social and language abilities. Many individuals with autism develop speech and learn to communicate with others. Early intervention can make extraordinary differences in your child's development. How your child is functioning now may be very different from how he or she will function later on in life.

The information following on the social symptoms, communication disorders and repetitive behaviors associated with autism is partially taken from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) website.



Social symptoms

Typically developing infants are social by nature. They gaze at faces, turn toward voices, grasp a finger and even smile by 2 to 3 months of age. By contrast, most children who develop autism have difficulty engaging in the give-and-take of everyday human interactions. By 8 to 10 months of age, many infants who go on to develop autism are showing some symptoms such as failure to respond to their names, reduced interest in people and delayed babbling. By toddlerhood, many children with autism have difficulty playing social games, don't imitate the actions of others and prefer to play alone. They may fail to seek comfort or respond to parents' displays of anger or affection in typical ways.

Research suggests that children with autism are attached to their parents. However, the way they express this attachment can be unusual. To parents, it may seem as if their child is disconnected. Both children and adults with autism also tend to have difficulty interpreting what others are thinking and feeling. Subtle social cues such as a smile, wave or grimace may convey little meaning. To a person who misses these social cues, a statement like "Come here!" may mean the same thing, regardless of whether the speaker is smiling and extending her arms for a hug