

Red Flags for Autism

Warning Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Early Childhood

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If you observe items on the following list it may mean that your child is developing differently. Parents should discuss this with their family doctor or pediatrician and ask about a referral for further assessment.

- Doesn't point to show others things he/she is interested in
- Inconsistent or reduced use of eye contact with people outside the family
- Rarely smiles when looking at others or does not exchange back and forth warm, joyful expressions
- Does not spontaneously use gestures such as waving, reaching or pointing with others
- Does not respond to gestures and facial expressions used by others
- More interested in looking at objects than at people's faces
- May be content to spend extended periods of time alone
- Doesn't make attempts to get parent's attention; doesn't follow/look when someone is pointing at something; doesn't bring a toy or other item to parent to show them
- Inconsistent in responding when his or her name is called
- Seems to be in his/her "own world"
- Doesn't respond to parent's attempts to play, even if relaxed
- Avoids or ignores other children when they approach or interact
- No words by 16 months or no two-word phrases by 24 months
- Any loss of previously acquired language or social skills
- Odd or repetitive ways of moving or holding fingers, hands or whole body (rocking, pacing). Walks on toes.
- Displays a strong reaction to certain textures, sounds or lights (e.g., may reject clothing or want to be completely covered, put hands over ears, stare at lights)
- May appear indifferent to pain or temperature

- Lacks interest in toys, or plays with them in an unusual way (e.g., lining up, spinning, smelling, opening/closing parts rather than using the toy as a whole)
- May engage in prolonged visual inspection of objects (e.g., may stare along edges, dangle string or move items closely in front of his/her eyes)
- Insists on routines (has to perform activities in a special way or certain sequence; requires a particular route or food and is difficult to calm if even small changes occur)
- Preoccupation with unusual interests, such as light switches, doors, fans, wheels – difficult to distract from these activities
- Unusual fears but may not seek comfort from adults

Autism is treatable.

Early intervention is critical.

Know the warning signs of autism in young children.

Act early.



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