

child showed less interest in social interaction (e.g., abnormal eye contact, decrease response to own name, decrease imitation, usual repetitive behavior) and had verbal and motor delay (Bolton, Golding, Emond, et al, 2012; Golnik and Maccabee-Ryaboy, 2010; Kirchner, Hatri, Heekeren, et al, 2011; National Autism Association, 2015c). Children with ASD may have significant gastrointestinal symptoms. Constipation is a common symptom and can be associated with acquired megarectum in children with ASD (Buie, Campbell, Fuchs, et al 2010; National Autism Association, 2015a).

Children with autism do not always have the same manifestations, from mild forms requiring minimal supervision to severe forms in which self-abusive behavior is common. The majority of children with autism have some degree of CI, with scores typically in the moderate to severe range. Despite their relatively moderate to severe disability, some children with autism (known as **savants**) excel in particular areas, such as art, music, memory, mathematics, or perceptual skills, such as puzzle building.

### Nursing Tip

Claims of beneficial results from the use of secretin, a peptide hormone that stimulates pancreatic secretion, has been studied extensively in multiple randomized control trials, denoting clear evidence that it lacks any benefit (Krishnaswami, McPheeters, and Veenstra-Vanderweele, 2011; Williams, Wray, and Wheeler, 2012).\*

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\*Additional information on secretin may be found by contacting the Autism Society, 4340 East-West Hwy., Suite 350, Bethesda, MD 20814-3067; 800-3AUTISM or 301-657-0881; <http://www.autism-society.org>.

Communication impairments are a common sign in children with ASD that may range from absent to delayed speech. Any child who does not display language skills such as babbling or gesturing by 12 months old, single words by 16 months old, and two-word phrases by 24 months old is recommended for immediate hearing and language evaluation. Autism regression is when the child seems to develop normally then regresses suddenly; this is a red-flag event that has been frequently displayed in expressive language (Fernell, Eriksson, and Gillberg, 2013; National Autism Association, 2015c).