



Autism:

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication.

Symptoms:

Signs of autism in young children include:

- not responding to their name
- avoiding eye contact
- not smiling when you smile at them
- getting very upset if they do not like a certain taste, smell or sound
- repetitive movements, such as flapping their hands, flicking their fingers or rocking their body
- not talking as much as other children
- repeating the same phrases



Signs of autism in older children include:

- not seeming to understand what others are thinking or feeling
- finding it hard to say how they feel
- liking a strict daily routine and getting very upset if it changes
- having a very keen interest in certain subjects or activities
- getting very upset if you ask them to do something
- finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on their own

Diagnosis:

Your child's doctor will look for signs of developmental delays at regular checkups. If your child shows any symptoms of autism spectrum disorder, you'll likely be referred to a specialist who treats children with autism spectrum disorder, such as a child psychiatrist or psychologist, pediatric neurologist, or developmental pediatrician, for an evaluation.

Treatment:

No cure exists for autism spectrum disorder, and there is no one-size-fits-all treatment. The goal of treatment is to maximize your child's ability. Early intervention during the preschool years can help your child learn critical social, communication, functional and behavioral skills.

There are many types of treatments available. These treatments generally can be broken down into the following categories, although some treatments involve more than one approach:

- **Behavioral:** A notable behavioral treatment for people with ASD is called **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**. ABA encourages desired behaviors and discourages undesired behaviors to improve a variety of skills
- **Developmental:** It focuses on improving specific developmental skills, such as language skills or physical skills, or a broader range of interconnected developmental abilities.
- **Educational:** One type of educational approach is the **Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children (TEACCH)** approach. TEACCH is based on



the idea that people with autism thrive on consistency and visual learning.

- **Social-Relational:** focuses on developing social skills and building emotional bonds. Some social-relational approaches involve parents or peer mentors.
- **Pharmacological:** Some medications treat co-occurring symptoms that can help people with ASD function better. For example, medication might help manage high energy levels, inability to focus, or self-harming behavior, such as head banging or hand biting.
- **Psychological: Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT)** is one psychological approach that focuses on learning the connections between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

