

# What Are the Early Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children?

## Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition that affects social interaction, communication, and behavior. Since autism exists on a spectrum, the severity and type of symptoms vary from person to person. Detecting ASD early can significantly impact a child's ability to develop essential skills through early intervention and support.

Many parents and caregivers may not immediately recognise the signs of ASD, as some behaviors may appear as typical childhood traits. However, understanding the early signs of ASD can help in seeking professional evaluation and timely intervention.



# Recognising Early Signs of ASD

One of the most noticeable early indicators of ASD is difficulty with social interaction. Babies and toddlers with autism may show little interest in making eye contact, responding to their name, or engaging in interactive play such as peekaboo.

They may appear indifferent to others or struggle to understand facial expressions and emotions. As they grow, these social challenges may become more apparent when they have difficulty forming friendships or understanding social norms.

Communication challenges are another common sign of ASD. Some children may experience speech delays, while others may speak fluently but struggle with conversation skills. A child with ASD might repeat words or phrases they hear, a behavior known as echolalia, without understanding their meaning. They may also have trouble interpreting nonverbal cues like tone of voice, gestures, or facial expressions, making social interactions difficult.

Repetitive behaviors and restricted interests are also key indicators of ASD. Children with autism often engage in repetitive movements such as hand-flapping, spinning, or rocking. They may have highly focused interests, sometimes fixating on specific objects, topics, or activities. Additionally, they may insist on strict routines and become distressed when their environment or daily schedule changes unexpectedly.

Many children with ASD also display sensory sensitivities. Some may be hypersensitive to lights, sounds, textures, or touch, while others may be under-responsive and seek sensory stimulation, such as excessive spinning or touching objects. These sensory differences can influence their behavior and daily activities.

## When to Seek Professional Help

If a child exhibits multiple early signs of ASD, it is advisable to consult a pediatrician or developmental specialist for further evaluation. Professionals use developmental screening tools to assess social and communication milestones, followed by comprehensive diagnostic evaluations if necessary. An early diagnosis enables access to therapies that can significantly enhance a child's development and quality of life.

## Summary

Recognising the early signs of autism allows parents and caregivers to seek early intervention, which can lead to improved communication, social skills, and adaptive behaviors. If you notice signs of ASD in your child, consult a healthcare professional for evaluation and support.

For more information, visit [Autism Spectrum Australia](#).