1. [Autism Spectrum Disorders](https://autismsciencefoundation.org/what-is-autism/) (ASD) are a complex set of neurological disorders that severely impair social and communicative functioning.
2. Autism affects about 1 in 36 children in the United States.
3. Autism is about 4 times more likely in boys than girls.
4. Autism affects children of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.
5. Autism is a spectrum disorder, which means that every child with Autism has different skills, challenges, and needs.
6. While we do not know all of the causes of Autism, we have learned that there are likely many contributing factors, including genes, early brain development, and the environment.
7. Autism can be reliably diagnosed by age 2, but children may be diagnosed at earlier ages.
8. Early identification of Autism helps children get the services they need earlier.
9. Typically, the earlier children are diagnosed and receive services, the better their outcomes are.
10. There is no “cure” for Autism, but there are several interventions that can help children learn important skills that improve everyday life.
11. Children with Autism can learn and succeed in the classroom and beyond.
12. Individuals with ASD can range from having cognitive impairments to having typical or above average IQs.
13. Typical ASD behaviors include lack of interest in other people and other social challenges, stereotyped actions (hand flapping, body rocking), insistence on sameness, resistance to change and, in some cases, aggression or self-injury.
14. Between [30-50%](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15946331) of people with autism have seizures.
15. Autism was originally believed to be a form of schizophrenia brought on by a traumatic experience or bad parenting. This is not the case.
16. Autism is highly heritable. There are many genetic and environmental factors involved with autism. These include both rare and common variants. About 15% of cases of autism can be linked to a specific gene mutation.
17. Some of the environmental factors that have been studied include medical conditions in parents, age, toxic chemicals, medications taken during pregnancy and before pregnancy, and diet and nutrition.
18. In the late 1990s and early 2000s there was a theory that vaccines given at 18-24 months of age may be responsible for autism. However, we now know that autism starts before birth, even possibly before conception, and that vaccines do not cause autism.
19. It is possible to detect signs of autism in infants as young as 6-18 months. A sign or early identification marker does not mean a child will go on to receive a diagnosis. It means that they need specific support services as early as possible. For example, if a baby fixates on objects or does not respond to people, he or she may be exhibiting early signs of an autism spectrum disorder.
20. Older babies and toddlers may fail to respond to their names, avoid eye contact, lack joint attention, or engage in repetitive movements such as rocking, or arm flapping. They may play with toys in unusual ways.
21. Parents who notice these signs, or are concerned their children are not meeting developmental milestones, should contact their pediatrician or another health care provider and request a developmental screening. There are a number of standardized tools that can inform clinical judgement about whether the diagnosis is autism or something else.
22. Scientists agree that the earlier a child receives early intervention services the better the child’s prognosis. All children with autism can benefit from early intervention.
23. The most effective treatments available today have been developed and adapted from the theories of applied behavioral analysis (ABA) and occupational, speech and physical therapy.
24. There is no cure for autism, and most individuals with ASD will need support and services throughout their lifetime.
25. Many supposed “cures” for autism advertised on the internet are not backed by scientific studies and can be harmful.
26. [Applied behavioral analysis (ABA)](https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis) and occupational, speech, and physical therapies are frequently used in treatment. ABA has proven to be an effective approach. "It works by identifying the reasons why kids are engaging in behaviors," said Perryman. For example, throwing tantrums and [flapping hands](https://www.health.com/condition/anxiety/what-is-stimming) are often triggered by the frustration of not being able to express that you're hungry.
27. therapy includes teaching methods of social interaction, such as making better eye contact. "The earlier the child is treated, the more gains that are seen with communication and social skills," said Perryman.
28. [Medications](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/autism/conditioninfo/treatments/medication-treatment), such as antidepressants, anti-seizure medication, or [stimulants](https://www.health.com/condition/adhd/cant-focus-how-to-tell-when-its-time-to-try-medication), are sometimes prescribed to treat conditions that may occur alongside ASD, such as anxiety, ADHD, epilepsy, or depression.
29. People with [autism spectrum disorder](https://www.health.com/condition/autism/autism-facts) have a greater risk of contracting other health conditions as well. Researchers found that many adults with ASD may have other conditions such as constipation, obesity, [insomnia,](https://www.health.com/condition/sleep/what-is-insomnia) and [epilepsy](https://www.health.com/condition/seizures/epilepsy-symptoms), according to a 2021 study published in the Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.
30. In general, symptoms of ASD tend to involve communication skills and social behaviors, such as difficulty recognizing others' intentions and feelings or not making eye contact, according to [Autism Speaks](https://www.autismspeaks.org/what-are-symptoms-autism).
31. Kids with ASD may also repeat certain behaviors (such as flapping their hands) over and over again, or they may become obsessed with a particular toy. Lack of verbal skills is another one of the most well-known symptoms—approximately 40% of people with autism are nonverbal, according to [Autism Speaks](https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-statistics-asd)—but this does not happen in every case.
32. Other signs of ASD in children include being overly sensitive to noise, throwing intense tantrums, not responding when spoken to, not pointing at interesting objects, or not playing "pretend" games by 18 months.
33. Typically, the earlier children are diagnosed and receive services, the better their outcomes are.