

# Autism

# Spectrum Disorder

## Factsheet

### What is Autism?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder and children affected by it may have difficulty in communicating, socializing and learning.



You notice something isn't quite right with your child's development



Does not play or interact with other children as expected



Does not talk as expected



Does not use eye contact and gestures to communicate

## What are the early signs of Autism? *for children upto 5 years of age*

They are not meant to be diagnostic or comprehensive.

### Language and communication

- Poor or no response to name
- Delayed language development
- Frequent repetition of set words and phrases
- Reduced use of language for communicating with others.

### Social interaction

Reduced or absent –

- Social interests or interactions
- Pretend play
- Eye contact
- Ability to indicate objects by pointing at them

### Repetitive and restricted behaviors

- Over-focused or unusual interests
- Repetitive stereotypical movements such as hand flapping, body rocking while standing, spinning, finger flicking
- Repetitive acts, e.g. opening and closing doors or flicking light switches on/off
- Over or under reaction to sensory stimuli, for example textures, sounds, smells
- Insistence on following same routines

Spotted early signs for Autism?

Consider taking the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (**M-CHAT**) or the Quantitative Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (**Q-CHAT**), available online for free.

**Please note that this is by no means a diagnostic tool for Autism.**

**It merely helps identify children who are at a higher risk for Autism.**



## Whom to approach when I spot Autism red flags?

If you have specific concerns with regard to your child's development, then irrespective of the results of the M-CHAT/Q-CHAT please carry your scores to seek counsel through diagnostic evaluation performed by a certified

Pediatrician/  
Developmental Pediatrician



Psychologist/  
Child-Psychiatrist

## Why did my child develop Autism?

**Autism is a genetic condition. That does not mean one of the parent has caused it.**

Autism specific genes are being identified & studied



- **Autism is not a single gene disorder, but likely caused due to defects in multiple genes.**
- **Defects may appear denovo (new occurrence) in the child, without being inherited from the parent.**
- **Research is ongoing to understand more about the cause of Autism.**



## How is Autism diagnosed?

A trained clinician has to make sure that the child's behaviour and abilities meet the **DSM V diagnostic criteria for Autism**

Standardized Autism assessment involves careful observation of –

- How the child socially interacts & uses gestures/expressions
- How the child engages in play
- The child's power of imagination
- Restricted or repetitive behaviors, if any
- Unusual sensory interests or aversions of the child



After assessment you may encounter two possibilities -

1. Autism is diagnosed
2. Autism diagnostic criteria not met. Alternate explanations for child's health is discussed.

After diagnosis is confirmed, do not hesitate to ask your doctor for effective ways to manage your child's health.

**NOTE:** Your Pediatrician may use a combination of tests shown below to arrive at a definitive diagnosis for Autism. Tests include CARS-2, ADOS-2, ADI-R, ISAA to name a few. It is not necessary to take all tests. A clinician needs to use their judgment to choose relevant tests.

THERE ARE NO MEDICAL TESTS THAT CAN DIAGNOSE ASD  
ONLY PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS CAN DIAGNOSE ASD

**DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR A DIAGNOSIS**

## Evidence-based therapies for Autism management

### SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY(SLT)

- SLP can help children improve their verbal & social communication skills.
- Improved ability to communicate can also help reduce unwanted behaviors.

### BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Behaviour management relies on:

- Increasing positive behaviours
- Reducing reasons for problem behaviours
- Reducing negative behaviour

### STRUCTURED TEACHING AND DEVELOPMENTAL MODELS

Effective structured teaching and developmental models include:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)
- Denver Model, Relationship developmental intervention (RDI), Responsive Teaching (RT), to name a few
- TEACCH Method

### PICTORIAL EXCHANGE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (PECS)

- PECS is a communication tool that helps an individual with little or no communication to seek an object from a person through the use of visual images.

### OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (OT)

OT can help children learn

- Motor skills
- Activities for daily living (brush teeth, wear clothes etc.)

**Behavior therapy is the most effective evidence- based practice for Autism management**

# You are not alone – seek help and guidance



## Do what is best for your child

- ✓ Learn, think and plan how to help your child
  - ✓ Involve the entire family
  - ✓ Engage the child in fun activities
  - ✓ Communicate and interact with your child to the maximum extent
- 



## REMEMBER, individuals with Autism -

- ✓ Like structure & routine in their everyday life
  - ✓ Gain from the use of visual aids, visual schedules or social stories.
- 



## Remember to take care of yourself in the process

- ✓ Do not ignore your other children
  - ✓ Engage in regular physical activities and relaxation for your well- being
  - ✓ Do not forget to interact and spend time with your spouse and other family members.
- 



## Help give back to your community

- ✓ Join a peer support group near you.
- ✓ Share your experience with other parents
- ✓ Educate your community & dispel myths about Autism

# Is there a cure for Autism?

## REMEMBER,



- Autism is not a disease.
- There is no cure for autism.
- But, with the right educational-behavioural and communication support, children with autism can learn and change.
- Early intervention is effective in improving learning, communication and life outcomes.

### April is Autism awareness month

- With early intervention, support from family members and educators, individuals diagnosed with Autism are thriving and leading successful lives.
- Do not let a diagnosis get in the way of happiness and well-being of that individual.



## QUACK WATCH

### REMEMBER,

There are many people out there claiming to cure Autism through various methods such as metal chelation, Stem cell therapy, HBOT or dietary modifications (without testing for specific food intolerances). There is no evidence that any of these methods is effective for autism care.

- *Research in the field of Autism is ongoing to understand more about the condition.*
- *Please do not let your vulnerability & desperation get in the way of your child's health.*
- *Informed and empowered parents provide effective care for their children.*



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