

Autism

Spectrum Disorder

Factsheet

What is Autism?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition, and children with Autism may communicate, socialize, and learn in ways that differ from neurotypical expectations.



You notice that your child's development is different than expected.



Does not play or interact with other children as expected.



Does not speak 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*

This is not meant to be diagnostic or comprehensive.

Language and Communication

- Limited or no response to their name
- Delayed language development
- May repeat words or phrases frequently
- Limited use of language for communication

Social Interaction

- Limited engagement in social interactions or interactive play
- Limited pretend play skills
- Limited eye contact
- May not point to indicate interest in objects

Repetitive and Restricted Behaviors

- Intense focus on specific interests
- Repetitive movements (e.g., hand flapping, body rocking, spinning, finger flicking)
- Repetitive actions (e.g., opening and closing doors, flicking light switches on and off)
- Over or under reaction to sensory input (sounds, smells, touch)
- Strong preference for routines and difficulty with changes

Noticed early signs?

You may consider taking the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) or the Quantitative Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (Q-CHAT)—both are available online for free. *These are not diagnostic tools but they can help identify children who may be at a higher likelihood of autism. If you have concerns, seeking professional guidance is recommended.*



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 caused by a single gene but is likely influenced by multiple genetic factors.**
- **Some genetic differences can occur spontaneously in a child, without being inherited from parents.**
- **Researchers are actively studying autism-related genes to understand its origins better.**



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 –

- Notice how the child connects and expresses.
- Observe their play and imagination.
- Recognize comforting patterns or routines.
- Understand their sensory preferences.



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
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REMEMBER, individuals with Autism -

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