

# What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects a person's behavior and ability to communicate and relate with others. ASD is first noticed in childhood and lasts for life. It can be mild or severe. No one knows what causes it and it has no cure, but treating it early is very important!



## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE HAS ASD?

Children with ASD have problems in 2 areas:

- ❑ Relationships and communication – Children with ASD have trouble relating to others. They often can't read facial expressions and they avoid eye contact. They might not like being touched and many prefer not to play with others.
- ❑ Children with ASD often take longer than other children to learn to speak. Some never learn to speak.
- ❑ Limited interests – Children with ASD often get interested in one specific thing and ignore most everything else. They also tend to have rituals that they must follow exactly. If these habits get disrupted, the children get upset.

Parents often have a gut feeling that something is wrong when a child has ASD. Talk to your health professional if you have that feeling.



## WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR CHILDREN WITH ASD?

It is important to get the right help if your child has any of the signs above. A health professional can do tests to find out for sure if it is ASD. They can make sure that something else isn't causing the symptoms you see. If your child does have ASD, it's important to get treatment as soon as possible. ASD cannot be cured, but children can overcome some of the problems it causes if they are addressed early.

## APPLIED BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS (ABA)

Applied Behavioral Analysis is one of the best treatments for most

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit [nciph.org/autism](http://nciph.org/autism)



children with autism. ABA therapy a therapist finds the behaviors that are getting in the way for your child. Then the therapist helps them practice new behaviors that are healthier. ABA is sometimes very helpful to stop harmful or dangerous behaviors.

## SENSORY INTEGRATION THERAPY

Sensory integration therapy helps the brain work better. It uses activities like swinging, rolling, or jumping on a trampoline. Other activities that can help are brushing the child's body, or gently squeezing the joints. This therapy is usually done by an occupational therapist (OT).



## SUPPLEMENTS

- ❑ Some children with autism also have problems with digestion. Probiotics can help.
- ❑ Omega-3 fatty acids are important for healthy brain function. You can get these by eating fish or taking a fish oil supplement.
- ❑ Vitamin C, vitamin B6 and magnesium, zinc, and methylfolate can help some children with ASD.
- ❑ Sleep problems can make ASD worse for some children. Melatonin can sometimes help.
- ❑ Talk with your health professional about which supplement might be right for your child.

## SPECIAL DIETS

Sometimes changing your child's diet can help with ASD. Sometimes parents have to try different options before finding what works. Here are some possibilities:

