

# What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. **The Autism experience is different for everyone.** It is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is often referred to as a "spectrum condition" that affects people differently and to varying degrees.

While there is no known single cause for Autism, it is generally accepted that it is caused by differences in brain structure or genetic factors. **Early diagnosis and intervention can greatly support an Autistic individual with the resources needed to live fully.**



## Signs & Symptoms

- Restricted or repetitive behaviors, movements, or phrases
- Co-occurring conditions including but not limited to, mental health illnesses, gastrointestinal issues, seizure disorders, and more.
- Lack of response to normal stimuli (i.e. his/her name, visual cues)
- Avoiding eye contact
- Restricted or repetitive behaviors, movements, or phrases
- Delayed movement, language, and/or cognitive skills
- Atypical verbal communication, non-speaking, or non-verbal
- Difficulty understanding or expressing feelings

# Facts & Statistics

**1 in 44 children are diagnosed with autism.** Since 2000, the Autism prevalence rate has been consistently increasing from one in 150 to now one in 44.

The diagnosis rate for Autism is **rising by 10-17% each year.**

Over the next decade, an estimated **700k to 1.1 million+ Autistic teens** will enter adulthood and age out of school-based services.

**Vaccines do not cause autism.**

**The cost of caring for Autistic Americans is estimated to rise to \$460+ billion by 2025** in the absence of more-effective interventions and supports. An estimated \$175 to \$196 billion of these costs are for adult services.

**Drowning accounts for 90% of deaths** for Autistic individuals (14 or younger) who wandered or bolted.

**31% of children with ASD have an intellectual disability,** 25% are in the borderline range, and 44% have average to above-average IQ scores.

**Children who receive an Autism diagnosis by age 4** are fifty times more likely to receive services.

**Boys are 4 times more likely** than girls to be diagnosed with autism.

**Autism affects all ethnic and socioeconomic groups.**

**Anxiety disorders** affect up to 40% of individuals with Autism.

**Over 7 million individuals in the United States** are on the Autism spectrum; Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability in the U.S.

# Support

## Getting the help you need.

Early identification is associated with dramatically better outcomes for people with Autism. The earlier a child is diagnosed, the earlier they can begin benefiting from early intervention therapies and education.

There are no medical tests, such as blood work or brain scans, for diagnosing Autism. An accurate medical diagnosis must be based on observation of the individual's communication, social interaction, and their activities and interests. While there is not a single behavioral or communication test that can detect Autism, several Autism-specific tools are now being used for formal diagnosis. The characteristic behaviors of ASD may or may not be apparent in infancy (18 to 24 months), but usually become obvious during early childhood (24 months to 6 years).

## Screening

All children should be screened for Autism by their family pediatrician three times by the age of three. (9, 18, and 24 or 30 mo.)



Intervention should start when an Autism diagnosis is suspected, rather than when a formal diagnosis is made.

**Currently, there is no cure for Autism.** However, continued research has provided a clearer understanding of the disorder and has led to better treatments and therapies that can positively improve quality of life.

The Autism Society is the largest and oldest grassroots autism organization in the United States. **Our mission is to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.** Annually, the Autism Society and its 71 local affiliates serve over half a million individuals in the Autism community through information and referrals (I&R), education, community, advocacy, and support.

Our National Helpline offers our trained Information & Referral (I&R) Specialists to provide resources to services and supports across the country.

To speak to an I&R Specialist directly, call **800-3-AUTISM (800-328-8476)**, or email [info@autism-society.org](mailto:info@autism-society.org).

Visit [www.AutismSociety.org](http://www.AutismSociety.org) to learn more.