



## Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)

### What are ASDs?

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a group of related brain-based disorders that affect a child's behavior, social, and communication skills. They are lifelong conditions with no known cure. However, children with ASD can progress developmentally and learn new skills. Some children may improve so much that they no longer meet the criteria for ASD.

### Different types of ASDs:

**Autistic Disorder** This is what most people think of when hearing the word "autism." Children with autistic disorder usually have significant language delays, social and communication challenges, and unusual behaviors and interests. Many children with autistic disorder can also have intellectual disability.

**Asperger Syndrome** Children with Asperger syndrome usually have some milder symptoms of autistic disorder. They might have social challenges and unusual behaviors and interests. However, they typically do not have problems with language or intellectual disability.

**Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified** (PPD-NOS; also called "atypical autism") Children who meet some of the criteria for autistic disorder or Asperger syndrome, but not all, may be diagnosed with PDD-NOS. Children with PDD-NOS usually have fewer and milder symptoms than those with autistic disorder. The symptoms might cause only social and communication challenges.

### What are the signs & symptoms?

ASDs begin before the age of 3 and last throughout a person's life, although symptoms may improve over time. Some children with an ASD show hints of future problems within the first few months of life. In others, symptoms

might not show up until 24 months or later. Some children with an ASD seem to develop normally until around 18 to 24 months of age and then they stop gaining new skills, or they lose the skills they once had. No 2 children with ASD have the exact same symptoms, but the criteria are somewhat standardized. The number of symptoms and how severe they are can vary greatly. A person with an ASD might:

- Not respond to their name by 12 months
- Not point at objects to show interest by 14 months
- Not play "pretend" games by 18 months
- Avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- Have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings
- Have delayed speech and language skills
- Repeat words or phrases over and over
- Give unrelated answers to questions
- Get upset by minor changes
- Have obsessive interests
- Flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles
- Have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel



### Treatment

There is currently no cure for ASDs. However, research shows that early intervention treatment services can greatly improve a child's development. Early intervention services help children from birth to 3 years old learn important skills. Services can include therapy to help the child talk, walk, and interact with others. ***It is important to talk to your child's doctor as soon as possible if you think your child has an ASD or other developmental problem.***