

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)¹, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a “developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges.” Some people with ASD need a lot of help. Some people with ASD need just a little help.

What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Children with ASD look just like children who do not have ASD. Children with ASD may:

- Have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things
- Have problems with communication, emotional, and social skills
- Not want change in their daily activities
- Repeat certain behaviors

How a child with ASD learns, solves problems, and thinks can range from gifted to severely challenged.

A diagnosis of ASD now includes several conditions that used to be diagnosed separately:

- Asperger’s syndrome
- Autistic disorder
- Pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS)



Signs and symptoms

Signs of ASD begin during early childhood, typically last throughout a person’s life, and can include:

- Appearing to be unaware when people talk to them, but responding to other sounds
- Avoiding eye contact
- Being very interested in people, but not knowing how to talk, play, or relate to them
- Having trouble adapting when a routine changes

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- Having trouble expressing their needs using typical words or motions
- Having trouble relating to others
- Having trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings
- Having unusual reactions to the way things feel, look, smell, sound, and/or taste
- Losing skills they once had (e.g., no longer saying words they were using)
- Not having an interest in other people
- Not looking at objects when another person points at them
- Not playing "pretend" games (for example, not pretending to "feed" a doll)
- Not pointing at objects to show interest (for example, not pointing at an airplane flying over)
- Preferring not to be held or cuddled, or cuddling only when they want to
- Repeating actions over and over again
- Repeating or echoing words or phrases said to them, or repeating words or phrases in place of normal language
- Wanting to be alone

Diagnosis

Diagnosing ASD can be difficult. A doctor looks at a child's behavior and development. There is no medical test to diagnose ASD.

Children with ASD:

- Can be diagnosed at 18 months or younger
- Often do not get a final diagnosis until much older
- May not get the help they need, if not diagnosed at a young age

Treatment

ASD currently has no cure. Early intervention treatment services can improve a child's development, according to the CDC. Early intervention services help children from birth to 3 years old (36 months) learn important skills, such as:

- Interacting with others
- Talking
- Walking

Talk to your child's doctor as soon as you think your child has ASD or other developmental problem.



Causes and risk factors

Scientists have identified many causes for ASD, including:

- Biologic factors
- Environmental factors
- Genetic factors
- How old a child's parents are when the child is born
- The prescription drugs valproic acid and thalidomide, if taken during pregnancy

Scientists do not know all causes of ASD. Scientists are certain that vaccines do not cause ASD².

Teenagers and adults with ASD³

According to the CDC, as children with ASD age, they have a higher risk of:

- Being unemployed or under-employed
- Not going to college
- Continuing to live with families or relatives
- Spending little to no time with friends or participating in community or social activities

Individuals with ASD, during adolescence and young adulthood:

- May experience changes in their ASD symptoms, behaviors, and co-occurring health conditions
- May have trouble functioning and participating in the community

If you are concerned about your child's behavior—or if you are concerned about your behavior—talk to your doctor.

Sources

1. "Autism Spectrum Disorder," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last accessed October 19, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html>.
2. "Autism and Vaccines," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last accessed October 19, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/autism.html>.
3. "Autism Spectrum Disorder in Teenagers and Adults," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last accessed October 19, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/autism-spectrum-disorder-in-teenagers-adults.html>.

Call If You Need Us

If you have questions or need help reading or understanding this document, call us at **800-480-1825 (TTY: 711)**. We are available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Eastern time. We can help you at no cost to you. We can explain the document in English or in your first language. We can also help you if you need help seeing or hearing. Please refer to your Member Handbook regarding your rights.

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- You can also file a civil rights complaint with the
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights
electronically through their Complaint Portal, available at
<https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or at **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201, **800-368-1019**, **800-537-7697 (TDD)**. Complaint forms are available at <https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

Auxiliary aids and services, free of charge, are available to you. **800-480-1825 (TTY: 711)**

Humana provides free auxiliary aids and services, such as qualified sign language interpreters, video remote interpretation, and written information in other formats to people with disabilities when such auxiliary aids and services are necessary to ensure an equal opportunity to participate.

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Language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you.
800-480-1825 (TTY: 711)

English: Call the number above to receive free language assistance services.

Español (Spanish): Llame al número que se indica arriba para recibir servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística.

繁體中文 (Chinese): 您可以撥打上面的電話號碼以獲得免費的語言協助服務。

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese): Gọi số điện thoại ở trên để nhận các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí.

한국어 (Korean): 무료 언어 지원 서비스를 받으려면 위 번호로 전화하십시오.

Tagalog (Tagalog – Filipino): Tawagan ang numero sa itaas para makatanggap ng mga libreng serbisyo sa tulong sa wika.

Русский (Russian): Позвоните по вышеуказанному номеру, чтобы получить бесплатную языковую поддержку.

Kreyòl Ayisyen (French Creole): Rele nimewo ki endike anwo a pou resevwa sèvis éd gratis nan lang.

Français (French): Appelez le numéro ci-dessus pour recevoir des services gratuits d'assistance linguistique.

Polski (Polish): Aby skorzystać z bezpłatnej pomocy językowej, należy zadzwonić pod wyżej podany numer.

Português (Portuguese): Ligue para o número acima para receber serviços gratuitos de assistência no idioma.

Italiano (Italian): Chiamare il numero sopra indicato per ricevere servizi di assistenza linguistica gratuiti.

Deutsch (German): Wählen Sie die oben angegebene Nummer, um kostenlose sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zu erhalten.

日本語 (Japanese): 無料の言語支援サービスを受けるには、上記の番号までお電話ください。

Diné Bizaad (Navajo): Wódahí béésh bee hani'í bee wolta'ígíí bich'í' hódíílnih éí bee t'áá jik'eh saad bee áká'ánída'áwo'déé níká'adoowot.

العربية (Arabic): اتصل برقم الهاتف أعلاه للحصول على خدمات المساعدة اللغوية المجانية.