



What are Spectrum Disorders?



Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a group of developmental disabilities caused by a problem with the brain. Scientists do not know yet exactly what causes this problem. ASDs can impact a person's functioning at different levels, from very mildly to severely. There is usually nothing about how a person with an ASD looks that sets them apart from other people, but they may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most people. The thinking and learning abilities of people with ASDs can vary - from gifted to severely challenged. Autistic disorder is the commonly known type of ASD, but there are others, including "pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified" (PDD-NOS) and Asperger Syndrome (source: Centers for Disease Control).

What can I do if I think my child has an ASD?

Talk with your child's doctor or nurse. If you or your doctor thinks there could be a problem, ask for a referral to see a developmental pediatrician or other specialist

Right now, the main research-based treatment for ASDs is intensive structured teaching of skills, often called behavioral intervention

It is very important to begin this intervention as early as possible in order to help your child reach his or her full potential. Acting early can make a real difference!

What are some of the signs of ASDs?

People with ASDs may have problems with social, emotional and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not what change in their daily activities. Many people with ASDs also have different ways of learning, paying attention or reacting to things. ASDs begin during early childhood and last throughout a person's life.

What are some of the symptoms of ASD?

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.

A person with an ASD might:

- Not respond to their name by 12 months
- Not point at objects to show interest (point at an airplane flying over) by 14 months
- Not play "pretend" games (pretend to "feed" a doll) 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 (echolalia)
- Give unrelated answers to questions
- Get upset by minor changes
- Have obsessive interests
- Flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles



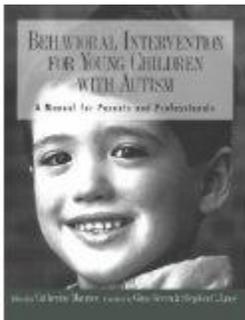
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- have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel

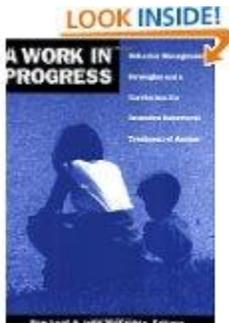
Is there a cure for autism?

Although there is no known cure for autism, research indicates the best treatment is intensive early intervention such as applied behavior analysis.



Behavioral Intervention for Young Children with Autism

By [Catherine Maurice](#), [Gina Greene](#) and [Stephen C. Luce](#)



A Work in Progress: Behavior Management Strategies & A Curriculum for Intensive Behavioral Treatment of Autism

By [Ph.D. Leaf Ron](#), [John McEachin](#), [Jaisom D. Harsh](#)