

APRIL IS ALL ABOUT AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

More Than 3.5 Million Americans Live with ASD

Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental disability that affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. It is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a spectrum condition that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. Early diagnosis is fundamental to effective intervention. Please read the following guide to learn more about ASD, its cause, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment.

01 | Cause

Researchers do not know the exact cause of autism but they have found abnormalities in brain structure or function. No one gene has been identified to cause autism; researchers are searching for irregular segments of genetic code that children with autism may have inherited. There is also research indicating that under certain conditions, a cluster of unstable genes may interfere with brain development, resulting in ASD.

02 | Symptoms

Behaviors may be apparent in infancy, but usually become clearer during early childhood. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) developed a detailed list of behaviors, listed in the following four categories:

- **Communication**
Example: does not respond to name by 12 months of age
- **Social Behavior**
Example: poor eye contact
- **Stereotyped Behavior**
Example: gets "stuck" doing the same things over and over
- **Other Behavior**
Example: loses a skill the child once had

03 | Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosing autism may include several specialists, including psychologists, educators and other medical professionals. A medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder is most frequently made by a physician using

the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of the American Psychological Association. The manual guides physicians in diagnosing ASD according to a specific number of symptoms.

Each individual with autism has unique strengths and challenges, so there is no blanket method of treatment for autism. The treatment plan should be tailored to address the patient's specific needs. Intervention may include behavioral treatments, medications or both. Many people with autism have other medical conditions that will need to be addressed as well, such as sleep disturbances, seizures and gastrointestinal issues. Addressing these problems can improve attention, learning and related behaviors.

For more information on autism spectrum disorder, please visit: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

***Did You Know?**
Approximately 1 in 59
children in the U.S. are born
with autism*

References

<http://www.autism-society.org/what-is/diagnosis/>

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/autism/conditioninfo/symptoms>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-1yr.html>