

Is it Autism? What Parents Need to Know

Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning that there is a wide degree of variation in the way it affects people. Every child on the autism spectrum has unique abilities, symptoms, and challenges.

Social Skills

Signs and symptoms of autism spectrum disorders:

Basic social interaction can be difficult for children with autism spectrum disorders.

Symptoms may include:

- Unusual or inappropriate body language, gestures, and facial expressions (e.g. avoiding eye contact or using facial expressions that don't match what he or she is saying).
- Lack of interest in other people or in sharing interests or achievements (e.g. showing you a drawing, pointing to a bird).
- Unlikely to approach others or to pursue social interaction; comes across as aloof and detached; prefers to be alone.
- Difficulty understanding other people's feelings, reactions, and nonverbal cues.
- Resistance to being touched.
- Difficulty or failure to make friends with children the same age.

Speech and Language

Signs and symptoms of autism spectrum disorders:

Symptoms may include:

- Delay in learning how to speak (after the age of 2) or doesn't talk at all.
- Speaking in an abnormal tone of voice, or with an odd rhythm or pitch.
- Repeating words or phrases over and over without communicative intent.
- Trouble starting a conversation or keeping it going.
- Difficulty communicating needs or desires.
- Doesn't understand simple statements or questions.
- Taking what is said too literally, missing humor, irony, and sarcasm.

Behavioral Health Works, Inc. (BHW) provides diagnostic testing and early intervention and therapies to treat Autism. Please contact us at (800) BHW-1266 or visit us online at www.bhwcares.com to learn more about how our team of experienced and compassionate clinicians can help.

Behavior and Play

Signs and symptoms of autism spectrum disorders:

Children with ASD are often restricted, rigid, and even obsessive in their behaviors, activities, and interests.

Symptoms may include:

- Repetitive body movements (hand flapping, rocking, spinning); moving constantly.
- Obsessive attachment to unusual objects (rubber bands, keys, light switches).
- Preoccupation with a specific topic of interest, often involving numbers or symbols (maps, license plates, sports statistics).
- A strong need for sameness, order, and routines (e.g. lines up toys, follows a rigid schedule). Gets upset by change in their routine or environment.
- Clumsiness, abnormal posture, or odd ways of moving.
- Fascinated by spinning objects, moving pieces, or parts of toys (e.g. pinning the wheels on a race car, instead of playing with the whole car).

Autism statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identify around 1 in 88 American children as on the autism spectrum—a ten-fold increase in prevalence in 40 years. Autism is a complex disorder that requires proper diagnosis from trained professionals and intensive treatment.

