

# Autism

## Awareness

An introduction to  
understanding autism, support  
needs and where to find help

PART 1



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## PART 1

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# What is autism?

## Autistic people may act in a different way to other people

Autistic people may:

- find it hard to communicate and interact with other people
- find it hard to understand how other people think or feel
- find things like bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable
- get anxious or upset about unfamiliar situations and social events
- take longer to understand information
- do or think the same things over and over

## Autism is not an illness

Being autistic does not mean you have an illness or disease. It means your brain works in a different way from other people.

It's something you're born with or first appears when you're very young.

If you're autistic, you're autistic your whole life.

Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a "cure". But some people need support to help them with certain things.

## Autistic people can live a full life

Being autistic does not have to stop you having a good life.

Like everyone, autistic people have things they're good at as well as things they struggle with.

Being autistic does not mean you can never make friends, have relationships or get a job. But you might need extra help with these things.

## Autism is different for everyone

Autism is a spectrum. This means everybody with autism is different.

Some autistic people need little or no support. Others may need help from a parent or carer every day.

## Some people use other names for autism

There are other names for autism used by some people, such as:

- autism spectrum disorder (ASD) – the medical name for autism
- autism spectrum condition (ASC) – used instead of ASD by some people
- Asperger's (or Asperger syndrome) – used by some people to describe autistic people with average or above average intelligence

Unlike some people with autism, people with Asperger's do not have a learning disability. Some people call this "high-functioning" autism. Doctors do not diagnose people with Asperger's anymore.

But if you were diagnosed with it before, this will stay as your diagnosis.

## It's not clear what causes autism

Nobody knows what causes autism, or if it has a cause.

It can affect people in the same family. So it may sometimes be passed on to a child by their parents.

Autism is not caused by:

- bad parenting
- vaccines, such as the MMR vaccine
- diet
- an infection you can spread to other people

## Autistic people can have any level of intelligence

Some autistic people have average or above average intelligence.

Some autistic people have a learning disability. This means they may find it hard to look after themselves and need help with daily life.

## Autistic people may have other conditions

Autistic people often have other conditions, like:

- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or dyslexia
- anxiety or depression
- epilepsy

# Signs of autism in children

## Autism in young children

Signs of autism in young children include:

- not responding to their name
- avoiding eye contact
- not smiling when you smile at them
- getting very upset if they do not like a certain taste, smell or sound
- repetitive movements, such as flapping their hands, flicking their fingers or rocking their body
- not talking as much as other children
- repeating the same phrases

## Autism in older children

Signs of autism in older children include:

- not seeming to understand what others are thinking or feeling
- finding it hard to say how they feel
- liking a strict daily routine and getting very upset if it changes
- having a very keen interest in certain subjects or activities
- getting very upset if you ask them to do something
- finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on their own
- taking things very literally – for example, they may not understand phrases like "break a leg"

## Autism in girls and boys

Autism can sometimes be different in girls and boys.

For example, autistic girls may be quieter, may hide their feelings and may appear to cope better with social situations.

This means autism can be harder to spot in girls.

## Get advice if:

- you think your child might be autistic

You could speak to:

- a GP
- a health visitor (for children under 5)
- any other health professional your child sees, such as another doctor or therapist
- special educational needs (SENCO) staff at your child's school

Getting diagnosed can help your child get any extra support they might need.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/signs/children](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/signs/children)

# Signs of autism in adults

## Main signs of autism

Common signs of autism in adults include:

- finding it hard to understand what others are thinking or feeling
- getting very anxious about social situations
- finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on your own
- seeming blunt, rude or not interested in others without meaning to
- finding it hard to say how you feel
- taking things very literally – for example, you may not understand sarcasm or phrases like "break a leg"
- having the same routine every day and getting very anxious if it changes

- noticing small details, patterns, smells or sounds that others do not
- having a very keen interest in certain subjects or activities
- liking to plan things carefully before doing them

## Autism in women and men

Autism can sometimes be different in women and men.

For example, autistic women may be quieter, may hide their feelings and may appear to cope better with social situations.

This means it can be harder to tell you're autistic if you're a woman.

## Other signs of autism

You may also have other signs, like:

- not understanding social "rules", such as not talking over people
- avoiding eye contact
- getting too close to other people, or getting very upset if someone touches or gets too close to you

## Get advice if:

- you think your child might be autistic

If you already see a health professional, such as another doctor or therapist, you could speak to them instead.

Getting diagnosed can help you get any extra support you might need.



# How to get diagnosed



## 1. Talk to someone for advice

If you or your child have signs of autism, the next step is to talk to someone about it.

You could speak to:

- a GP
- a health visitor (for children under 5)
- any other health professional you or your child see, such as another doctor or therapist
- special educational needs (SENCO) staff at your child's school

Ask them if they think it's a good idea to refer you for an autism assessment.

An assessment is done by autism specialists. It's the only way to find out if you or your child are autistic.

## Tips for when you speak to someone

### DO

- write a list of the signs of autism you think you or your child have and bring it with you
- ask people who know you or your child well (like friends, family or teachers) if they have noticed any possible signs you could put on your list
- bring a pen and paper so you can take notes
- bring your child or someone who knows you well with you if you think it might help (you do not have to)

### DON'T

- try not to talk too much about other things – autism should be the main thing you talk about

## 2. Have an autism assessment

An autism assessment is where a team of autism specialists check if you or your child are autistic.

An assessment team may:

- ask about any problems you or your child are having
- watch how you or your child interact with other people
- speak to people who know you or your child well, such as family, friends, your GP or your child's teachers

At the end of the assessment, you'll be given a report saying if you or your child are autistic.

### How a diagnosis can help

#### Parents and children

For parents and children, a diagnosis can help you:

- understand your child's needs and how you can help your child
- get support for your child at school
- get support for parents and carers, such as financial benefits

- understand that your child is not just being "naughty" or "difficult"

#### Adults

For adults, a diagnosis can help you:

- understand why you might find some things harder than other people
- explain to others why you see and feel the world in a different way
- get support at college, university or work
- get some financial benefits

### If you find it hard to get diagnosed

It's not always easy to get an autism assessment. Waiting times can also be very long.

If you're finding it hard to get an assessment, you could:

- ask to speak to someone else, like another GP – this is called getting a second opinion
- call the National Autistic Society helpline on 0808 800 4104 – they can give you advice about your options, including private assessments

It may also help to speak to other people who have been in a similar situation.





# What happens during an autism assessment?

## How to get an assessment

You need to be referred for an assessment by someone like a GP or special educational needs (SENCO) staff at your child's school.

You may have to wait a few months to get an appointment.

## What you can do while you wait for an assessment

If you think you or your child need support at school, home or at work, you can start getting help before having an assessment.

You can:

- ask a GP if the assessment team can suggest any support groups
- find a local support group using the National Autistic Society services directory
- talk to teachers or special educational needs (SENCO) staff at your child's school
- speak to student support services at college or university
- speak to your manager or human resources at work
- ask your local council for a needs assessment to see what support they can recommend

## What happens during an autism assessment?

You may have 1 or more appointments with a team of different professionals.

### For children

The assessment team may:

- ask you about your child's development, such as when they started talking
- watch how you and your child interact, and how your child plays
- read any reports sent by the GP and the nursery or school

A member of the team may also visit your child's school to watch them in class and at break time.

### For adults

The assessment team may:

- ask you to fill in a questionnaire about yourself and any problems you have
- speak to someone who knew you as a child to find out about your childhood
- read any reports from the GP about other health problems you may have

## Getting the result

When the assessment is finished, you'll be given a report saying what the team found.

You may be given it by the team or get it in the post.

The report will say:

- if you or your child are autistic – it might say something like you "meet the criteria for autism spectrum diagnosis"
- what you or your child might need help with – such as social interaction, communication, behaviours or sensitivity to lights, colours and sounds
- what you or your child are good at

Sometimes the report can be hard to understand as it can be full of terms used by healthcare professionals.

Ask the assessment team if you need any help.

Autism is a lifelong condition, so the report will be used throughout childhood and into adulthood.

## If you do not agree with the result

When you get the report, you may:

- be told you or your child are not autistic
- be asked to wait until your child is a bit older to be assessed again, as the signs of autism may not be clear
- be given a diagnosis you do not agree with, such as a learning disability

Ask the assessment team why they have given the diagnosis they have.

If you still do not agree, you can:

- ask your GP to refer you to another team for a second opinion
- call the National Autistic Society helpline on 0808 800 4104 for advice – for example, about things like private assessments

**Remember that a second opinion may say the same thing.**





Autism and everyday life

# How to help your child with day-to-day life

## How to help your child communicate

### DO

- use your child's name so they know you're speaking to them
- keep language simple and clear
- speak slowly and clearly
- use simple gestures or pictures to support what you're saying
- allow extra time for your child to understand what you have said
- ask the autism assessment team if you can get help from a speech and language therapist (SLT)

- read more tips on communicating with your child from the National Autistic Society [<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>]

### DON'T

- try not to ask your child lots of questions
- try not to have a conversation when it's noisy
- try not to say things that could have different meanings, such as "pull your socks up" or "break a leg"

## Dealing with anxiety

Anxiety affects a lot of autistic children and adults. It's often caused by not being able to make sense of things going on around them.

Try to find out why your child's feeling anxious.

It might be because of:

- a change in routine – it might help to prepare your child for any change, such as a change of class at school
- a noisy or brightly coloured place – it might help to take your child to a calmer place, such as another room

If your child is often anxious, ask your autism assessment team or child mental health team for a referral to a counsellor or therapist with experience of autism.

The National Autistic Society directory has a list of counsellors specialising in autism.

## Helping with your child's behaviour

Some autistic children have behaviours like:

- stimming – a kind of repetitive behaviour (such as flapping their hands or flicking their fingers)
- meltdowns – a complete loss of control caused by being totally overwhelmed

## Common types of behaviour in autistic children

Some autistic children may behave in ways that put a lot of strain on you and your family.

You may hear health professionals call some behaviours "challenging".

These behaviours include:

- stimming – a kind of repetitive behaviour
- meltdowns – a complete loss of control over behaviour

Some autistic children can also be physically or verbally aggressive. Their behaviour can be harmful to themselves or other people.

But remember, all autistic children are different and not every day will be challenging or stressful.

## Why these behaviours happen

Many autistic children have difficulties with communication, which can affect their behaviour.

Some things that can cause these behaviours include:

- being oversensitive to things like bright lights or loud noises
- being undersensitive to things like touch or pain
- anxiety, especially when routines suddenly change
- not being able to make sense of what's going on around them
- being unwell or in pain

These behaviours are not your or your child's fault.

## Stimming

Stimming stands for "self-stimulating behaviour". It's a kind of repetitive behaviour.

Common stimming behaviours include:

- rocking, jumping, spinning, head-banging
- hand-flapping, finger-flicking, flicking rubber bands
- repeating words, phrases or sounds
- staring at lights or spinning objects

Stimming is usually harmless. It may look odd to others, but there's no need to stop it if it's not causing any problems for you or your child.

Ambitious about Autism has more on stimming and repetitive behaviours.

[<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/information-about-autism>]

## Meltdowns

Meltdowns are a complete loss of control caused by being totally overwhelmed.

If your child has a meltdown, the most important thing is to try to stay calm and keep them safe.

If you're worried your child might hurt themselves, try to hold them to keep them safe.

It's not always possible to prevent meltdowns, but there are some things you can do that may help.

These include:

- letting your child wear headphones to listen to calming music
- turning down or removing bright lights
- planning ahead for any change in routine, such as a different route to school

It may help to keep a diary for a few weeks to see if you can spot any meltdown triggers that you can do something about.

The National Autistic Society has more on meltdowns. [<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/meltdowns.aspx>]

## Speak to the autism assessment team or a GP if your child is:

- stimming all the time or having lots of meltdowns
- being bullied at school because of their behaviour
- aggressive, harming themselves or harming other people

If you're struggling to cope, you may be referred to a professional who can help.

## Eating difficulties

Many children are "fussy eaters".

Autistic children may:

- only want to eat foods of a certain colour or texture
- not eat enough or eat too much
- have problems with coughing or choking while eating
- be constipated, so they feel full even when they're not

It may help to keep a food diary, including what, where and when your child eats. This can help you spot any common issues your child has.

Speak to a GP or the autism assessment team about any problems your child's having with eating.

The National Autistic Society has more about how to help with eating problems.

[<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/health/eating.aspx>]

## Problems sleeping

Many autistic children find it hard to get to sleep, or wake up several times during the night.

This may be because of:

- anxiety
- sensitivity to the light from smartphones or tablets
- problems with the sleep hormone melatonin

You can help your child by:

- keeping a sleep diary of how your child sleeps to help you spot any common issues
- sticking to the same bedtime routine
- making sure their bedroom is dark and not noisy
- letting them wear ear plugs if it helps

If these tips do not help, talk to a GP, who may prescribe a medicine called melatonin to help your child's sleep. [<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/healthy-sleep-tips-for-children/>]

## Staying healthy

It's important that your child has regular check-ups with the:

- dentist
- optician
- doctors treating any other conditions your child has

Children over 14 who also have a learning disability are entitled to an annual health check.

Do not be afraid to let staff know what they can do to make it easier to go for check-ups.

Find out more ways to stay healthy from the National Autistic Society.

[<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/health.aspx>]

## Friendships and socialising

Some autistic children find it hard to make friends.

There are some things you can do to help:

### DO

- get ideas from other parents on forums or local support groups. Call National Autistic Society on 0808 800 4104 (Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm, Friday 9am to 3pm or visit [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk))
- ask your child's school if they can help
- ask the autism assessment team if they can help your child communicate and socialise
- join local social groups that are autism friendly
- read more advice about making friends from Ambitious about Autism [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk) or call 020 8815 5444

**Please remember that comments on social media and forums are often based on personal experience and should not be taken as advice that would help you or your child**

### DON'T

- do not put too much pressure on your child – learning social skills takes time
- do not force your child into social situations if they're OK being on their own



Why fit in when  
you were born to

STANDOUT

Dr Seuss

# Help for families of autistic people

## How autism can affect you and your family

Having an autistic child can put a lot of strain on you and your family.

You might need to spend a lot of time helping your child get the support they need. This can be very stressful and exhausting.

It may be hard to make time for the rest of your family and can affect your relationships with each other.

If you feel you need help, you can get support from lots of places.

## Things that can help you and your family

### DO

- ask friends and family if they can help with day-to-day things or just be there to talk to
- get advice from other parents of autistic children or autistic adults
- listen to other parents' stories – the charity [healthtalk.org](http://healthtalk.org) has stories of parents of autistic children, or you can search online for blogs, videos and books
- ask your local council for a carer's assessment – you might be able to get extra support and financial benefits
- think about doing a course for parents of autistic children – such as the EarlyBird course from the National Autistic Society

### DON'T

- do not feel guilty for taking time for yourself when you can – even just going for a walk on your own can help give you a break

## Talking to your child about autism

It's your choice when you want to tell your child about their autism.

Some parents do it straight away, while others wait until their child's a bit older. There's no right or wrong time.

When you tell your child, it may help to:

- do it when they're feeling calm or relaxed
- talk to them in a place where they feel comfortable, with no distractions
- explain they do not have an illness, but they might need extra support to help them with some things
- explain they might find some things harder than other people, and some things easier
- bring them to a support group to meet other autistic children

The Autism Easyread guide from the National Autistic Society might help you explain autism in a way your child will understand. [<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd/intro-easyread.aspx>]

## Supporting your other children

Some children can find it hard if their brother or sister is autistic. If you have other children, there are things you can do to help them.

### DO

- make time for them whenever you can – try to do some activities with just them
- talk to them about what's going on and ask if they have any questions or worries
- let them have time on their own or with their friends – for example, sleepovers at friends' houses
- check the advice from Sibs, a charity for siblings of disabled children

### DON'T

- do not be afraid to involve them in things like meetings with health professionals – it can help them understand what's going on

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/autism-and-everyday-life/help-for-families](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/autism-and-everyday-life/help-for-families)





# Advice about school

## Choosing a school for your child

One of the main decisions you'll have to make is the type of school you want your child to go to. You'll have to decide if you think your child should go to a:

- mainstream school – a regular school, where your child may get support from special educational needs staff if they need it
- special school – a school for children with special educational needs

This can be a hard decision to make and there might not always be lots of choice where you live. You can read advice from the National Autistic Society about:

### Getting support at a mainstream school

If your child can go to a mainstream school or nursery, you can help them get support if you think they need it.

#### 1. Speak to the nursery or school

Speaking to staff at their nursery or school is the best place to start.

You could speak to:

- your child's teacher
- special educational needs (SENCO) staff, if the school has them

Talk to them about the needs you think your child has. For example, if they need help with communication, learning or social skills.

#### 2. Ask what support your child can get

Ask the teacher or SENCO what support they can provide.

This may be things like:

- extra teaching support for your child
- different ways of teaching that are better for your child
- separate lessons to help your child improve their skills

This may be enough for some autistic children. Other children may need extra support.

#### 3. Get extra support if your child needs it

If your child needs extra support their school does not usually provide, they'll need an education, health and care plan (EHC plan, or EHCP).

This is a document from your local council. It says what education and health needs your child has and what support they should get.

This can either help:

- the school apply for extra money so they can support your child
- you apply for a place at a school that's better for your child

## How to get extra support

- Ask your local council for an EHC assessment. The school may be able to do this for you.
- Have an assessment. The council will speak to you, the school and health professionals to work out what support your child needs.
- Get a draft plan. You can comment on the plan and add details like the type of school you want your child to go to.
- Agree the final plan.

The whole process can take a few months. Ask the school what support they can offer while it's happening.

## If you do not agree with the council's decision

The council may decide your child does not need an EHC assessment or plan. If this happens, they should tell you why.

If you do not agree with their decision, you have the right to appeal.

You'll be told how to do this when you hear from the council.

## Getting a place at a special school

To get a place at a special school, your child will usually need an EHC plan.

As part of an EHC plan, you have the right to tell your council what school you'd like your child to go to.

The council can only refuse this if they think there's a clear reason why the school is unsuitable.

The charity IPSEA has more about choosing a school with an EHC plan.

[<https://www.ipsea.org.uk/choosing-a-schoolcollege-with-an-ehc-plan>]

## Where to get help and advice

Getting support for your child can be a long and complicated process.

You can get advice about it from:

- your local special educational needs advice service  
[<https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/information-advice-and-support-services-network/find-your-local-ias-service>]
- the National Autistic Society education rights service  
[<https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/education-rights.aspx>]

It may also help to speak to other parents of autistic children.

## Dealing with anxiety about school

Going to school can be an anxious time for any child. Some autistic children might find it very hard.

The National Autistic Society has advice about coping with:

- starting or changing school
- lunch and break times
- homework
- exams
- bullying
- school absence or exclusion

# Changing from child to adult care

## What happens when your child turns 18

Where possible, your child will be asked to be more involved in the decisions about their care from the age of 16.

When your child turns 18:

- the NHS will continue to care for their health, but they may see a different doctor or a care team for adults
- they may have to pay for some of the care they used to get for free from the council
- any support they need to help with their education will need to be provided by their college or university, if they go to one

If your child has an education, health and care plan (EHCP), this will usually continue until they're 25, unless they:

- do not need support anymore
- go to university
- get a job

## What you can do to help your child

It's a good idea to start thinking about your child's future when they're around 14 or 15.

You could:

- speak to any doctors or care teams your child has about what happens when they turn 18
- apply for a needs assessment from your council – this may help your child get some free care and support when they're an adult
- apply for a carer's assessment if you care for your child – you may be able to get support and financial benefits
- ask colleges or universities what support they can give your child, if they're planning to go to one
- If you find it hard to get support from your council

If your council decides your child does not need the same support when they turn 18, you can complain if you disagree.

Check your local council's website for information about making a complaint.

The National Autistic Society has a complaint letter template that might help.

[<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/benefits-care/letters-and-complaints.aspx>]

You might also want to use an advocate (someone who helps speak up for you).

An advocate can:

- help you understand the care process and challenge decisions you disagree with
- go to meetings and write letters with you



**It is important to understand that this is not a list of every fake autism treatment.**

**Always speak to a GP for advice if there's something you're not sure about. Some fake treatments can be very dangerous.**

## Fake and harmful autism 'treatments'

### Fake treatments that do not work

Sometimes a doctor may suggest medicines or special diets for other conditions that affect autistic people (below).

But there are no "treatments" or "cures" for autism itself.

These things do not work and some can be harmful:

- special diets – such as gluten-free, casein-free or ketogenic diets
- vitamins, minerals and diet supplements
- bleaching – also called chlorine dioxide (CD) or Mineral Miracle Solution (MMS)
- GcMAF – an injection made from blood cells
- medicines – including medicines to help with memory, change hormone levels or remove metal from the body (chelation)
- neurofeedback – where brain activity is checked (usually by placing sticky pads on your head) and you're taught how to change it
- hyperbaric oxygen therapy – treatment with oxygen in a pressurised chamber

### How to spot fake treatments

There are some warning signs that may suggest a treatment is fake:

- it claims to "cure" or help people "recover from" autism
- it claims to work in most people and have quick results
- personal "stories" are used to claim it works, rather than medical evidence
- words like "miracle", "faith" and "trust" are used
- it can be done by anyone without any training or qualifications
- it costs a lot of money

### How to report fake treatments

You can help stop people selling dangerous treatments by reporting anything you think might be fake.

For a product bought in England, Scotland or Wales, call the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06.

For a medicine you think might be fake, visit [www.fakemedics.campaign.gov.uk](http://www.fakemedics.campaign.gov.uk).

For an advert for a fake treatment in the media, on a website or on social media, contact the Advertising Standards Authority [[www.asa.org.uk](http://www.asa.org.uk)].

# Other conditions that affect autistic people

## Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Symptoms of ADHD include:

- finding it hard to concentrate and getting distracted easily
- acting without thinking
- finding it hard to sit still

People with ADHD may need extra support at school or work. Sometimes they need to take medicine.

## Dyslexia and dyspraxia

Some autistic people have:

- problems with reading, writing and spelling (dyslexia)
- clumsy movements and problems with organisation and following instructions (dyspraxia)

Extra support at school can often help.

## Problems sleeping (insomnia)

Symptoms of insomnia include:

- finding it hard to go to sleep
- waking up several times during the night
- waking up early and not being able to go back to sleep

Changing your bedtime routine can often help.

Find out more about sleep problems from the National Autistic Society.

[<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/health/sleep.aspx>]

## Mental health problems

Many autistic people have problems like:

- feeling very worried a lot of the time (anxiety)
- feeling unhappy, irritable or hopeless (depression)
- feeling a need to keep doing certain actions (obsessive compulsive disorder, or OCD)

These conditions can often be treated with talking therapies or medicines.

## Learning disabilities

A person with a learning disability may find it hard to:

- understand new or complicated information
- learn new skills
- look after themselves

People with a learning disability often need help with daily life.

To find out more about learning disabilities visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/learning-disabilities](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/learning-disabilities).

## Epilepsy

Symptoms of epilepsy include:

- shaking and collapsing (called a "fit" or seizure)
- staring blankly into space
- strange smells or tastes
- tingling in your arms or legs

Epilepsy can often be treated with medicine.

To find out more about epilepsy visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy).

## Problems with joints and other parts of the body

Some autistic people may have:

- flexible or painful joints
- skin that stretches or bruises easily
- diarrhoea or constipation that does not go away

These can be caused by conditions like joint hypermobility syndrome or Ehlers-Danlos syndromes. You may need support from a range of health professionals, including a physiotherapist.

## See a GP if:

- you're autistic and think you might have another condition
- your child is autistic and you think they might have another condition
- you have another condition and think you might be autistic – if you already see a doctor, you could speak to them instead

# <sup>[NHS]</sup> Advice about medicines and medical appointments

## Useful tips for medicines

If you or your child take medicines, these tips may help.

### DO

- ask if there are other treatments that might help – medicine might not always be the only option
- ask about the possible side effects
- tell your doctor if you think the medicine is not working or is causing side effects – some medicines can work differently in autistic people
- ask for regular medicine reviews – a review is a check-up to see if the medicine you're taking is still right for you or your child and is not causing any problems
- read advice about problems swallowing pills if this is a problem for you or your child

### DON'T

- do not stop taking any medicines without speaking to a doctor first – some medicines can cause serious side effects if you stop taking them suddenly

## Useful tips for medical appointments

### DO

- ask for an appointment at the start or end of the day – the waiting room may be less busy and you may have to wait for less time
- ask for a double appointment so you're not rushed
- visit before your appointment – knowing what to expect when you go for your appointment may help you or your child feel less anxious
- bring someone else with you on the day if it might help
- ask at reception if there's a quiet place you can wait – if not, ask if you can wait outside or in the car and if someone can call or get you when they're ready

### DON'T

- do not worry about letting staff know how they can make things easier – you have the right to ask for simple changes to be made that may help



# Newly diagnosed: things to help

## Give yourself time

People react to a diagnosis of autism in different ways.

For some, it's a relief to find out why they or their child think, feel and act the way they do. For others, it can be a shock.

Try to give yourself time to come to terms with the diagnosis.

Remember:

- help and support is available
- even if things are hard now, they can get better
- you or your child are still the same person as before
- autism is not an illness or disease with treatments or a "cure"
- autistic people have things they're good at as well as things they need help with

## Find help and support services

You might feel alone when you or your child are first diagnosed.

But there are places you can get support.

You can get help from:

- local support groups
- national charities
- other autistic people or parents on social media and forums
- your school, college or workplace
- your local council
- your GP or the autism assessment team that diagnosed you

## Listen to other people's stories

Some people find it helpful to find out about other people's stories of autism.

The charity [healthtalk.org](http://healthtalk.org) has:

- stories of autistic people
- stories of parents of autistic children
- stories of grandparents of autistic children
- stories of siblings of autistic children

You could also search online for autism blogs, videos or books.

Remember, autism is different for everyone. What happened to other people might not be the same for you or your child.

## Look out for other health problems

Autism is not an illness. But many autistic people also have other conditions.

These are not always checked for during an autism assessment.

See a GP if you have any concerns about your or your child's health. They can help you get any extra care you need.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/newly-diagnosed](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/newly-diagnosed)

## Find out more about autism

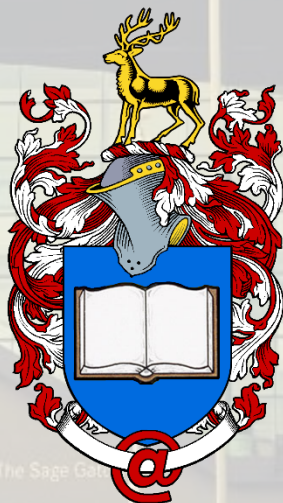
It might help you and your family to find out more about autism.

There can be quite a lot to take in. You do not have to read everything.

You can get trusted information from:

- **the NHS** – for information about what autism is and advice for parents and carers
- **National Autistic Society** – for autistic children and adults, parents and carers
- **Ambitious about Autism** – for autistic children and young people, parents and carer

*Autism Awareness: an Introduction to understanding autism, support needs and where to find help* has been prepared based on NHS source material and is supplementary, free of charge handout material to any face to face training or online training on subject of autism delivered by eCollege Education.



## eCollege Education

is a face-to-face and online training provider that offers accredited and bespoke training tailored to each individual client.

For more information please contact us:



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