

THE EVERYDAY AUTISM GUIDE

Contents

How is autism diagnosed

There is no blood test or brain scan to diagnose autism. The diagnosis is based on observing behavior and development, which is done by a specialist.

Who can diagnose autism

- Child Psychiatrists
- Pediatric Neurologists
- Developmental Pediatricians
- Clinical Psychologists
- Neuropsychologists



What evaluation includes

- Developmental history from parents
- Observation of the child's behavior
- Input from teachers and caregivers
- Assessment of cognitive and language skills

Barriers to diagnosis

- Long waitlists
- Schools not referring to children for evaluation
- Girls diagnosed later or missed
- Parents not knowing they can request an evaluation

Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disability that results in challenges in communication and sensory processing.

According to the CDC, there are 1/36 children that identify with this disorder.

Signs of Autism

Some common signs to look for are eye contact, flapping hands, repetitive, specific interests, decreased usage of language, and social skills. Sensitivity to sensory is common as well; for example, a child could cover their ears at sounds, refuse textures of clothes, or seek for movement to feel calm. In girls the signs could be more subtle and can go unrecognized until much later. Because autism is on a spectrum, each child is different and there is no absolute signs, just patterns in behavior.

Early Intervention

If you notice any of these signs in your child, the most important step is to speak to a pediatrician. It is beneficial for early intervention as it allows for proper care and access to resources, allowing the children to receive support earlier.

Understanding the Sensory Processing

Sensory processing refers to the way the nervous systems interprets the senses: sound, touch, sight, and movement. In autistic individuals, the process is different which can cause in either heightened (over-responsive) or reduced (under-responsive) to the stimuli.

Over-responsive

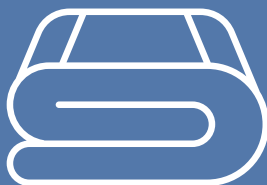
- Ordinary sounds feel too loud
- Certain textures feel painful
- Crowded, busy spaces are distressing
- May cover ears or eyes

Under-responsive

- Seeks spinning, crashing, or fast movement
- Craves deep pressure or hugs
- Seeks loud sounds or bright visuals
- May not notice sensations



Noise-reducing
Headphones



Weighted blanket



Fidget tools



Quiet Space

Interaction

- Use clear, simple, and calm language. Avoid using complex language choices
- Give time to process and respond
- Use visual cues such as pictures or written instruction
- Try to maintain routines
- Celebrate small wins and victories
- Get down to the child's eye level
- Respect personal space and boundaries
- Focus on the strengths and interests

Communication

- Always be patient, respectful, and compassionate
- Stay positive
- Take care of yourself
- Listen actively as each child communicates differently
- Avoid sarcasm, try to speak directly
- Ask one question at a time because many questions can be overwhelming
- Validate the feelings when the behavior needs redirection

Conditions that often co-occur with Autism

Anxiety

Uncertainty, change, and social situations can trigger intense anxiety in autistic individuals.

ADHD

Difficulty with attention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity.

Depression

Years of being misunderstood and unsupported can lead depression in autistic children. If your child seems withdrawn, irritable, or loses interests in things they love, seek support early.

Sensory Processing Disorder

Over and under-sensitivity to sounds, textures, light, and movement which can make the environments overwhelming.