

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



Overview

This complex disorder is commonly called "autism." It affects the way people understand the world around them. It affects the way they think and feel. It affects the way they interact with others.

Causes and Risk Factors

We don't know what causes autism. It may not have one single cause. Genetics may play a role - or it may be the things a child comes into contact with during development. Autism is more common in boys. It's more common in those who have a brother or sister with autism. It's also more common in children born to older parents.

Symptoms

Autism affects people in many ways. We call it a "spectrum disorder" because its symptoms can range from mild to severe. Symptoms usually begin early in childhood. With autism, a person may act in unusual ways. They may have odd facial expressions and gestures. They may do certain movements over and over again. They may have a lot of trouble expressing themselves and relating to others. People who have autism may have trouble with conversation and with eye contact. They may become fixated on certain things, and get upset when they have to change their normal routine. Many people with autism also have above-average intelligence. They may be very good at learning and remembering detailed information. They may excel at math, science, music or art.

Treatment

There is no cure for autism. However, there are therapies that can help people with autism develop important life skills. This can make it easier for them to interact with and relate to others. Medications may also help. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.

