



What is Autism?

Autism is one of a group of disorders known as **Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)**. ASD's are developmental disabilities that cause impairments in three core areas: communication, social interaction, and unusual behaviors or interests. Communication deficits can range from a person being completely nonverbal to having typical speech, but with difficulty carrying on a conversation with a peer. In the area of social interaction, some people are able to interact in groups, while others diagnosed are unable to even tolerate others near them. In regard to unusual behaviors or repetitive movements (also sometimes known as self-stimulatory behaviors), children may exhibit physical movements such as hand-flapping in front of their eyes, toe walking, jumping or humming. They may also be interested in topics or objects, and engage in or talk about them incessantly.

The range of severity for ASDs can vary from mild to quite severe. Some individuals may be gifted in certain areas, while demonstrating deficits in others. Skills and abilities in persons with autism are often splintered. Persons with ASD often struggle with sensory processing (sight, touch, noise, smell, and taste).

ASDs include: Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder- Not Otherwise Specified, Rett's Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Asperger's Disorder.

ASDs are four times more likely to occur in boys than in girls. Prevalence rates suggested in October 2009 by the American Academy of Pediatrics are **1 in 91** children, **1 in 58** boys. ASDs occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. ASDs can be diagnosed before the age of three, but may not be diagnosed until later in life – even adulthood – depending on the level of severity. Though autism is a lifelong condition, intensive early intervention can lead to progress and a better prognosis.

What Causes Autism?

We still do not know what causes any form of ASD. Current research suggests a genetic and perhaps environmental basis. Studies have shown that, if an identical twin has an ASD, then the other will be affected about 75% of the time. In non-identical twins, if one child has a form of ASD, then the other has it about 3% of the time. Additionally, parents who have one child with an ASD, have a 2-8% chance of having another child who is affected.

What Treatments Are Available?

There are numerous treatments that may be effective for persons with an ASD. Five decades of research indicate that the most effective treatment is early and intensive therapy based in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA is delivered by means of several different approaches. Play-based therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and also feeding therapy are often recommended. It is often important to investigate the biomedical or nutritional needs of the consumer to promote better health and wellness. The most important thing to remember is that each person is different. An individualized approach based on clinical assessments and a focus on “SNAP” – Strengths, Needs, Abilities, and Preferences – is usually the most successful means of intervention.

At Family Behavioral Resources, we understand the urgency for seeking treatment and support when your loved one receives the diagnosis of ASD. We invite you to call us to learn more about our Specialized Autism Services and Adult Autism Services programs. Our Autism Team, comprised of Regional Directors of Autism Services, Autism Coordinators, a Family Support Coordinator (parent to a child previously diagnosed with autism) and Board Certified Behavior Analysts, is ready to serve your family by offering comprehensive assessments and evidence-based treatment.

We are proud to offer services to persons with ASD across the lifespan.

Information brought to you by Family Behavioral Resources
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