



THE  
**HOUSSON CENTER**  
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

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## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

According to the National Autism Association, “**Autism (ASD)** is a bio-neurological developmental disability that generally appears before the age of 3. Autism (ASD) impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills, and cognitive function. Individuals with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.”

### Statistics

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is diagnosed four times more often in boys than girls
- Affects 1 in 36 children
- About 40% of kids with ASD do not speak with the same frequency as other kids their age
- Autism Spectrum Disorder is treatable but early intervention is crucial

### Symptoms

<b>Isolation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Resists cuddling/holding and seems to prefer playing alone and retreats to their own world</li><li>● Doesn't engage in imitative or make-believe play</li></ul>
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<b>Difficulty with communicating or speech</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Does not speak, has delayed speech, or loses previous ability to say words or sentences</li><li>● Cannot start a conversation or keep one going (or only starts one to make requests or label items)</li><li>● Struggles with maintaining eye contact and may lack facial expression</li><li>● Fails to respond to their name</li><li>● Speaks with an abnormal tone or rhythm and may use a singsong voice or robot-like speech</li><li>● Repeats words or phrases verbatim, but doesn't understand how to use them</li><li>● Does not appear to understand simple questions or directions</li><li>● Does not express emotions or feelings and appears unaware of others' feelings</li><li>● Inappropriately approaches a social interaction by being passive, aggressive, or disruptive</li><li>● Has difficulty recognizing nonverbal cues, such as interpreting other people's facial expressions, body postures or tone of voice</li></ul>
<b>Abnormal physical actions or movements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Performs repetitive movements, such as rocking, spinning or hand flapping</li><li>● Has problems with coordination or has odd movement patterns, such as clumsiness or walking on toes, and has odd, stiff or exaggerated body language</li><li>● Performs activities that could cause self-harm, such as biting or head-banging</li><li>● Develops specific routines or rituals and becomes disturbed at the slightest change</li></ul>

<p><b>Intense fascination</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child is fascinated by details of an object, such as the spinning wheels of a toy car, but doesn't understand the overall purpose or function of the object</li> <li>• Fixates on an object or activity with abnormal intensity or focus</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hypersensitivity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unusually sensitive to light, sound, or touch, yet may be indifferent to pain or temperature</li> <li>• Has specific food preferences, such as eating only a few foods, or refusing foods with a certain texture</li> </ul>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/autism-spectrum-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20352928>

## Types of Disorders

- ASD is a **spectrum**
- Types:
  - Kanner's Syndrome
  - Rett Syndrome
  - Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD)
  - Pervasive Development Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)

*\*to learn more about each, there are descriptions here: <https://spectrumofhope.com/blog/5-different-types-of-autism/>\**

## Risk Factors and Causes

- Genetics
- Environmental factors (viral infections, medications, maternal pregnancy complications, or air pollutants)
- Gender
- Family history
- Fragile X syndrome, Rett syndrome, and other disorders
- Premature birth

## Complications

- Problems in school and with successful learning
- Employment problems
- Inability to live independently
- Social isolation
- Stress within the family

- Victimization and being bullied

## Treatment

- ASD is treatable, but it is very important for early intervention. However, intervention can happen at any age.

<b>Therapy</b> (such as behavioral management therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), nutritional therapy, speech-language therapy, and more)	<b>Social skills</b>	<b>Medication</b>	<b>Early intervention</b>
	Highly structured educational programs use a variety of activities to improve social skills, communication and behavior.	No medication can improve the core signs of autism spectrum disorder, but specific medications can help control symptoms.	Early intervention during the preschool years can help your child learn critical social, communication, functional and behavioral skills.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/autism-spectrum-disorder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20352934>

## How Can I Help My Child?

- Be patient
- Teach the child how to express anger without being too aggressive
- Always stay positive
- Ignore irritating attention-getting behavior
- Physical activity
- Show love and interest
- Join a support group
- Other tips :<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?contenttypeid=160&contentid=46>

## Resources:

- [Autism spectrum disorder - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)
- [Autism Fact Sheet - National Autism Association](#)
- [Autism \(who.int\)](#)
- [Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children - HealthyChildren.org](#)
- [30 Facts to Know about Autism Spectrum Disorder \(massgeneral.org\)](#)
- [Autism Spectrum Disorder - National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\) \(nih.gov\)](#)

You may also find this episode from Parenting for the Present helpful!

- <https://www.parentingforthepresent.com/podcast/c5qehwtmfjxwouk3j8yyq8vmovjkbh>

## Extra Helpful Resources (Books)

- *The Whole Brain Child* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.
- *How to Talk so Little Kids Will Listen* by Joanna Faber and Julie King
- *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- *No-Drama Discipline; the Whole-Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture your Child's Developing Mind* by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.
- *Breaking Free of Child Anxiety and OCD* by Eli R. Lebowitz, Ph.D.
- *Freeing your Child from Anxiety* by Tamar E. Chansky, Ph.D.