



Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ASD, is an umbrella term for a group of complex brain development disorders that result in social and communication deficits. Those with ASD have a hard time relating to the outside world, especially interacting socially or communicating verbally and nonverbally with others. They also may exhibit repetitive body movements, such as rocking or hand flapping.

There is no medical detection or cure for autism. Symptoms usually appear before age 3. Boys are four times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with the disorder, but anyone can develop Autism, regardless of racial, ethnic or social background. While scientists are not exactly sure of the cause, there is strong evidence of a genetic link that may be triggered by environmental factors such as pollution.

Common Symptoms of ASD Include:

- › Speech problems: total lack of speech, delayed development of speech, echolalia (rote repetition of something heard)
- › Social withdrawal: lack of response to people, poor or nonexistent eye contact
- › Unconventional behaviors: spinning, hand flapping, walking on tip toes
- › Sensory sensitivity: extreme dislike of certain sounds, textures or foods
- › Preference for routines and repetition

Treatment

There is no cure for ASD, but there are treatments that can improve symptoms. Among those are:

- › Biochemical: medication, food and vitamin supplements, and special diets
- › Neurosensory: training and stimulating of the senses, communication and speech therapy, daily life therapy
- › Behavioral: behavior modification training.

Early Intervention is Key

Studies have demonstrated that early behavioral intervention improves learning, communication and social skills in young children with autism. While the outcomes vary, all children do benefit. If your child or the child of someone you know shows signs of autism, have the child evaluated by a physician as soon as possible.

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