

# Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



## What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

ASD is a disorder affecting multiple areas of the brain and body. ASD is characterized by deficits in communication, behaviors, and social skills. ASD is referred to as a “spectrum disorder” because symptoms are unique to individuals and can vary in intensity. Individuals with ASD may demonstrate difficulty with:

- Communication: both verbal and nonverbal
- Sensory processing: may have sensitivity to sound, light, and touch
- Social interactions: may not make eye contact, pick up on social cues, or understand personal space
- Behavior: may have obsessive tendencies, exhibit outbursts, or wander

While the exact cause of ASD is unknown, the CDC states that autism is caused by “environmental, biological, and genetic factors.

## Early warning signs

A child may:

- not respond to their name by 12 months of age
  - not point at objects to show interest by 14 months
  - not play pretend games by 18 months
  - avoid eye contact and want to be alone
  - have delayed speech and language skills
  - repeat words or phrases over and over
  - get upset by minor changes
  - have obsessive interests (play for hours with same object)
  - flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles
- have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel

## Treatment for ASD?

There is currently no known cure for ASD.

HOWEVER, early intervention has proven effective in minimizing symptoms and maximizing an individual’s potential. Intervention strategies may include physical, occupational, speech, and/or behavioral therapy, medications, and biomedical and dietary treatments.

### QUICK FACTS

- > It’s estimated that ASD affects 1 in 68 US Children
- > ASD affects males almost 5 times more than females
- > The prevalence in Maryland is 1 of 55 children

## Where to go for help?

If you suspect your child has a developmental delay or ASD, get help immediately! DO NOT WAIT. Early intervention can help your child meet his/her full potential.

- > Talk to your pediatrician and request a screening.
- > Contact your local Infants and Toddlers Program (birth – 3 years) or Child Find Office (3 years +)

### National Resources

- > Autism Society of America  
[www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) / 1-800-328-8476
- > Autism Speaks  
[www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org) / 1- 888-288-4762
- > CDC [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) / 1-800-232-4636
- > First Signs [www.firstsigns.org](http://www.firstsigns.org)