



Autism Tip Sheet

From the Elida School District Autism Team

What do we mean by a Spectrum Disorder?

"If you've met one child with autism, you've met one child with autism"

Did you know ...

- Autism now affects 1 in 88 children and 1 in 54 boys
- Autism prevalence figures are growing
- Autism is the fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S.
- Autism costs a family \$60,000 a year on average
- Autism receives less than 5% of the research funding of many less prevalent childhood diseases
- Boys are nearly five times more likely than girls to have autism
- There is no medical detection or cure for autism

What is Autism Spectrum Disorders?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are complex developmental disorders of brain function. Each can affect a child's ability through signs of impaired social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, and unusual or severely limited activities and interest. These symptoms typically appear during the first three years of life. There is no cure for ASDs, but with appropriate early intervention, a child may improve social development and reduce undesirable behaviors.

What are common signs of an ASD?

ASDs are defined by a definite set of behaviors that can range from very mild to severe. Children diagnosed with an ASD do not embrace the typical patterns of child development. Some hints of future problems may be apparent from birth, while in most cases, signs become evident when a child's communication and social skills lag further behind other children of the same age.

Symptoms of an ASD do not remain static over a lifetime. In many children, symptoms of an ASD improve with intervention or as the children mature. Some eventually lead normal or near-normal lives. ASDs in adolescence could worsen behavior problems in some children as they may become depressed or increasingly unmanageable.

How is an ASD diagnosed?

Currently, no medical test exists to determine if a child has or will develop an ASD. Therefore, when evaluating a child, clinicians rely on behavioral characteristics to make a diagnosis. Diagnosis can be difficult for doctors because ASDs vary widely in severity and symptoms, and may go unrecognized, especially in mildly affected individuals or in those with multiple disabilities. Another consideration is that many of the behaviors associated with autism are shared by other disorders.

Source: [NAMI - National Association of Mental Illness](http://www.nami.org)

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