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Autism

Children who are autistic have a lifelong developmental disability, but the degree of symptoms and problems that they have can vary from mild to severe. The symptoms begin prior to the third birthday, and are most commonly noticed around the 30th month. It is not known what causes autism, but recent studies have shown that it is not linked to receiving the MMR vaccine. It is also known that it is not caused by bad parenting.

How common is autism?

According to the The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 'currently, the exact number of cases of autism is not known, but estimates range from one-in-500 cases, to one-in-1,000 cases of autism diagnosed in the U.S. every year. Initial studies done in the 1960s pointed to four-to-five cases of autism in 10,000 people, which is why autism was once thought of as a rare condition. However, dramatic increases in autism disorders in the U.S. and throughout the world clearly show that autism is not rare.'

Among the problems that autistic children may have include **difficulty interacting socially** with others and developing normal social skills. This can cause difficulty developing age appropriate social relationships with family and peers, an inability to use nonverbal social interactions, such as returning a smile or making eye contact, they may become attached to unusual objects (such as a rubber band or a stick) and they may have no interest in sharing their interests, achievements, or things they enjoy with others. Other early symptoms can include not developing a social smile, being overly irritable and easily upset, not cuddling, being indifferent to parents, not playing social games (such as peek-a-boo), and using people as tools or as a means to an ends (getting something from the refrigerator, etc.). The degree to which they have difficulty socializing can vary greatly, and some children may not interact with others or form emotional attachments at all and may prefer to be alone all of the time, while other with mild symptoms are able to make eye contact and may be affectionate.

Children with autism can also have problems with **communication**. This can range from a speech delay or total lack of speech (and unlike children with an expressive speech delay, autistic children do not compensate by using more nonverbal communication, such as gesturing), difficulty maintaining or starting a conversation, or difficulty with play. Others have echolalia, and their only speech consists of repeating things they have heard.

Autistic children may also have certain **repetitive** or stereotyped activities or patterns of **behavior**, such as being abnormally preoccupied with certain interests, needing to strictly stick to certain rituals or routines, and other repetitive habits and self-stimulating behaviors, such as head banging, body rocking, etc.

Also, many autistic children are mentally retarded (94% have an IQ of less than 68), and they are also more likely to have seizure disorders.

There is no cure for autism and most therapies are aimed at improving symptoms. These **treatments** can include language, social skills and behavioral therapy. Medications are also sometimes used to help improve attention (especially if other ADHD symptoms are present), aggressive behaviors, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms.

There are many controversial treatments for children who are autistic. The latest is the drug secretin, a gastrointestinal hormone, which has been shown in the latest studies to show no difference between it and a placebo in treating autistic children.

If you suspect that your child has autism, it is best to see a physician that specializes in treating autistic children, so that appropriate testing can be done. You should look for a Pediatrician who has special training or a special interest in taking care of children with autism. You may also need to see a child neurologist or child psychologist for further management.

Autism is a type of Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and others include [Asperger syndrome](#) and Retts syndrome.

Autism Recommended Reading List:

In association with amazon.com, these books can help you to learn more and become better educated about your child's condition, its treatment and preventing complications.

- [Thinking in Pictures : And Other Reports from My Life With Autism](#)
 - [Behavioral Intervention for Young Children With Autism : A Manual for Parents and Professionals](#)
 - [Let Me Hear Your Voice : A Family's Triumph](#)
 - [Pervasive Developmental Disorders : Finding a Diagnosis and Getting Help](#)
 - [The World of the Autistic Child : Understanding and Treating Autistic Spectrum Disorders](#)
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Autism Internet Resources:

- [Autism](#): Autism in children is a baffling brain disorder. Learn what autism is, how it is diagnosed, causes, accompanying disorders, and treatment options, including medications, educational disorders, and how to cope.
 - [Autism Screening Quiz](#): Does your child have any signs or symptoms of autism? Try our autism screening quiz to find out if your child needs further evaluation for autism or other communication disorder.
 - [Children's Autism Resources](#): Autism can cause children to have problems with communication, interacting socially with others and they may have certain repetitive behaviors. Learn about how to diagnosis and treat children with autism and where to go for more help.
 - [About Autism](#): The Autism Spectrum, including Autism, PDD, Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Asperger's and Rett Syndrome, is one of the most challenging health issues facing our children today.
 - [Autism Society of America](#): The mission of the Autism Society of America is to promote lifelong access and opportunities for persons within the autism spectrum and their families, to be fully included, participating members of their communities through advocacy, public awareness, education, and research related to autism.
 - [Autism](#): National Institute of Mental Health article on autism, with info on the symptoms of autism, causes, diagnosis and treatments.
 - [Communication in Autism](#): Although the cause of speech and language problems in autism is unknown, many experts believe that the difficulties are caused by a variety of conditions that occur either before, during, or after birth affecting brain development. Learn about the communication problems of children with autism and how they are treated.
 - [Clinical Trials for Treating Autism](#): ClinicalTrials.gov - Linking Patients to Medical Research about
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Autism.

- [Cure Autism Now](#): Cure Autism Now is an organization of parents, physicians, and researchers, dedicated to promoting and funding research with direct clinical implications for treatment and a cure for autism.
- [Facts about Autism](#): This clinical practice guideline from the American Academy of Pediatrics provides recommendations for the assessment and diagnosis of school-aged children with attention deficit disorder (ADHD). This guideline, the first of 2 sets of guidelines to provide recommendations on this condition, is intended for use by primary care clinicians working in primary care settings. The second set of guidelines will address the issue of treatment of children with ADHD.
- [How Can Occupational Therapy Help Children with Autism?](#): Because occupational therapy is concerned with helping each person to be as independent as possible in daily life activities, services can be useful to individuals of any age. Ideally, occupational therapy would be a part of the continuum of care, meaning that consultation would be sought any time the person with autism demonstrates difficulty in managing daily life tasks.
- [Vaccines and Autism](#): The currently available scientific evidence does not support the hypothesis that vaccines cause autism. A message from the CDC.

Related Links

- [autistic children](#)
- [autism](#)
- [symptoms](#)
- [treatments](#)
- [speech delay](#)
- find books about [autistic children](#) and [autism](#)

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