

Autism: Be Aware of the Signs



Each child is unique. Infants reach such milestones as waving bye-bye or smiling in response to a smile at different ages. One child says several words at 12 months while another talks at 18 months. However, consider screening for a child who seems to be much later than others his age in reaching developmental milestones. Remember autism is only one possible reason for delays. Discuss any concerns with a doctor so the child can be screened. A child who is identified with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can begin getting special help. This may limit the symptoms and help the child lead a fuller life.

What are autism spectrum disorders?

ASDs are developmental disabilities that can cause social, language, and behavior problems. The symptoms and severity of ASDs vary greatly. This can make it hard to define or diagnose them. Be more concerned if your child has more than one sign or symptom.

What are some common physical development symptoms? Be aware if your child ...

- reaches milestones such as rolling over, sitting, pulling up, or walking later than most children
- has trouble with fine motor skills, such as holding a spoon or picking up a small toy

What are some common social skill symptoms? Be concerned if a child ...

- does not respond to a smile or to her name
- does not point at objects to show interest
- has poor eye contact
- resists cuddling
- seems uninterested in adults or other children and prefers to play alone

What are some common language symptoms? A child with an ASD ...

- may not talk before age 2
- may say some words early then lose the ability to do so
- may repeat words or phrases without using them meaningfully

What are some common behavior symptoms? Children with ASDs may ...

- move constantly
- repeat movements, such as spinning or flapping hands
- focus for long periods of time on one object or part of an object
- object to any changes in routines
- have intense temper tantrums
- show unusual sensitivity to light, sound, and touch
- not engage in pretend play, such as driving a car or feeding a doll

The opinions, resources, and referrals provided in this Tip Sheet are intended for information purposes only and should not be considered or used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We advise parents to seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health care provider with questions regarding their child's health or medical conditions.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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