

FACT SHEET

DOES MY CHILD HAVE AUTISM?



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is considered to be lifelong neurological developmental disorder for which there is no known etiology or cure. Recent reports estimate that , on average as many as 1 in every 44 children in the United States has an ASD. It affects individuals from all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The first signs usually appear in early childhood but may not be recognized until later in life.

1 What are the characteristics of ASD?



ASD impacts an individual's ability to communicate, socially interact, behave, and learn. ASD is considered to be a spectrum disorder. That means ASD affects each person in different ways and can range from very mild to severe.

Additionally, other concerns parents indicate 'early on' may include feeding and sleeping issues and/or gastrointestinal problems. Parents of infants often report that it was difficult to find a formula the baby would tolerate. As the child ages, children's food preferences are often restricted to a limited variety of foods specifically related to texture or taste. Also, sleeping habits may be greatly affected.

Children may also process and respond to sensory stimuli differently. For example, some children may have an over or under reaction to a slight tap on the shoulder. These are a few examples that have been reported by parents who have children that have been diagnosed with ASD.

Communication	Social Interaction	Stereotypical and Repetitive Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your child has limited speech or repeats words over and over; no single words by 16 months• Your child has a lack of non-verbal communication such as waving or pointing• Your child seems to be in their "own world"; doesn't always seem to hear surrounding sounds or respond to their name• Your child has difficulty understanding 'wh' questions and the turn-taking style of a conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your child doesn't respond to their name at 9 months• Your child doesn't share a vested interest by pointing to or "showing" you things by 18 months• Your child has poor eye contact or may even avoid eye contact• Your child struggles with changes in routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your child may seem to get "stuck" on certain topics or activities and have a hard time moving on to other topics and activities; resistance to change in daily schedules• Your child doesn't seem to know how to play with toys; may fixate on one part of a toy• Your child has repetitive body movements such as hand flapping, rocking, or twirling• Shows excessive interest in unusual objects (ceiling fans, pieces of string or yarn, laundry machines, etc.)• Displays overreactions/underreactions to environmental sounds, textures, smells, and tastes

If you notice that your young child displays any of the characteristics above, it is important that you talk to your pediatrician or seek out a developmental pediatrician for a screening for an ASD. A screening is an assessment that is conducted through completing checklists, an observation, and interviews, it will help determine whether or not referral on for further evaluation for ASD is needed.

2 What is the referral process like?



In Illinois, referrals are made to Child and Family Connections. Child and Family Connections is part of a statewide system that is responsible for ensuring that all referrals of children under the age of three receive a timely response. Child and Family Connections will help families with children between birth and age three to obtain evaluations, assessments, and provide therapy. They will help determine eligibility for early intervention services. If eligible, an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) will be developed to help a child learn, grow, and receive needed services.

After the age of three according to Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE):

"Each school district is responsible for actively locating, identifying, and evaluating all children who live within the district boundaries who may qualify to receive special education and/or related services. All school districts must have written procedures for Child Find activities for all schoolchildren, including those attending private, charter, and religiously affiliated schools."

For more information on Child Find please see the additional resources.

For more information on who you should contact in your area for further evaluation support please see the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendent of Schools at:

https://iarss.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/IARSS-Directory_2020_2021_web-1.pdf

Additional Resources:

Websites

Child Find: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Parent-Guide-Special-Ed-Aug20.pdf#page=11>

Easter Seals: www.easterseals.com

American Academy Pediatrics: www.aap.org

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.org

First Signs: www.firstsigns.org

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html> (includes information on a Milestone tracker App)

Books

Maurice, C., Green, G., & Luce, S. (1996). Behavioral Intervention for Young Children with Autism: A manual for Parents and Professionals. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Central Illinois Specific:

Illinois Early Intervention Training Program: www.illinoiseittraining.org * 866-509-3867

Child & Family Connections of Central Illinois: <https://www.cifc.org/>

CFC #14 : Henry, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell, and Woodford: 888-482-4300

CFC #16 : Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean, and Vermilion: 800-877-1152

