



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

FACT SHEET

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that ASD affects 1 in 49 US children. It affects males over 4 times more than females. The prevalence in Maryland is 1 in 49 children.

What is ASD?

ASD is a neurological development disorder affecting multiple areas of the brain and body. ASD is characterized by deficits in communication, behaviors, and socialization. Additionally, individuals with an ASD may experience some physical symptoms, such as gastrointestinal complications or seizures. 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

What causes ASD?

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 (pretend to “feed” a doll) by 18 months
- avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- have delayed speech and language skills
- repeat words or phrases over and over
- give unrelated answers to questions
- get upset by minor changes
- have obsessive interests (play with same object for hours)
- flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles
- have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel
- Any sign of regression or loss of skills at any age!

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.

Where to go for help

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

- Contact your local Infants and Toddlers Program for a FREE evaluation.
- Talk to your pediatrician and request a screening using a standardized tool.
- Contact Pathfinders for Autism for free information and resources at 443-330-5341 or www.pathfindersforautism.org

National resources

Autism Society of America
www.autism-society.org
1-800-328-8476

Autism Speaks
www.autismspeaks.org
1-888-288-4762

CDC
www.cdc.gov
1-800-232-4636

First Signs
www.firstsigns.org