

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

This fact sheet is for general information only and does not replace professional medical advice. If provided to clients and their family, it must be reviewed with them to ensure understanding and address any questions or concerns.

<p>Description</p>	<p>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a group of neurodevelopmental disorders that may lead to challenges in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication • social skills • behavior <p>Someone with ASD may experience the world differently, affecting how they learn and interact with others.</p>
<p>What causes ASD?</p>	<p>It is unclear what causes ASD.</p> <p>ASD may be caused by the brain developing differently during early development. A combination of genetics and environmental factors may influence these differences^{1,2}.</p> <p>Some people may incorrectly believe that vaccines cause autism, but there is no credible research supporting this.^{3,4}</p>
<p>Prevalence (How many people have ASD?)</p>	<p>In the US, 1 in 68 children have ASD, Boys are diagnosed more often than girls.⁶</p> <p>It is true that ASD diagnoses are increasing. This may be due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including more symptoms/criteria for diagnosis • Diagnoses are made at younger age • Improvements in recognizing ASD symptoms.⁵
<p>What are some common Signs/Symptoms?</p>	<p>Signs of ASD begin in early childhood and typically last throughout the person’s lifetime. ASD is an “invisible” disability; You may not know who has it just by looking at them. Children or adults with ASD might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have difficulties relating to others. • Excessively repeat words or phrases they have heard elsewhere. • Have trouble expressing their wants and needs. • Have difficulty adapting to unexpected changes in routine. • Appear sensitive to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound. • Lose skills they once had (e.g. stop saying words they were using regularly).
<p>Do symptoms change over time?</p>	<p>The lifelong symptoms people with ASD experience may improve with age and support. Depending on their symptoms and available support, people with ASD may be able to enjoy a productive lifestyle in their communities.</p>
<p>How can I support someone with ASD?</p>	<p>Support can be provided before getting a diagnosis. For case management, education and strategies, local health professionals may refer the client to social services, community resources, and available rehabilitation services such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Needs Educators • Speech and Language Pathologists • Occupational Therapists • Psycho-Educators • Behavior Analysts



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How can I support someone with ASD? (continued)

The following interventions may help to improve symptoms and teach new skills:

- Educational/Behavioral Interventions such as Social Skills Training, Applied Behavioral Analysis, and Family Counselling.⁹
- Communication Strategies (e.g., functional communication training¹⁰, visual aids¹¹)

Medication will not cure ASD, but may help with some symptoms in combination with therapy/stimulation.⁸ Families must work closely with their doctor when discussing medications for children with ASD.

Where can clients and caregivers get more information? (click on the links)

[Centers for Disease Control – Autism Section](#)
[National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke – Autism spectrum disorder Fact Sheet](#)
[Disability Programs Specialized Services – Website](#)

Please keep in mind that a disability is only one part of a person. Identifying and fostering their strengths will be critical for supporting the person to reach their goals.

For more information on traditional practices that may apply, please refer to the Nishiiyu department of the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay.

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