

## What is Autism?

Autism (pronounced aw-tih-zum), is also called Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Autism Spectrum Disorder covers a wide range of complex developmental disorder. Children with ASD often have communication difficulties, social impairments, and unique behavioral patterns. Autism is the most severe form of ASD. Because it is a "spectrum" disorder, cases can vary from being very mild to extremely debilitating.

There are many common signs of autism and it can be noticed as early as infancy. The child may be unresponsive to people, or may focus intently on one item for a long period of time. Children who have ASD often become withdrawn and indifferent to socializing. They may avoid eye contact and not respond to their names. Children with autism don't understand social cues such as tone of voice or facial expressions, and they are often unable to know what constitutes appropriate behavior. They often engage in repetitive movements such as twirling, rocking, or head-banging. Children with ASD often begin speaking later than other children, and may refer to themselves in the third person.



There are specific cues which professionals can use to diagnose a child with ASD. These include: no response to name, poor eye contact, excessive lining up of toys, no social responsiveness, no babbling or pointing by age one, and no single words by age 16 months. Later, there are more indicators as

the child ages. These include difficulties making friends, sustaining conversation, and a preoccupation with certain objects or subjects.

Occasionally, an autistic child will have an outstanding skill. These children are referred to as "autistic savants," and it occurs in about 10% of autism cases. An autistic savant will often have an amazing musical ability or an incredible memory. An example of these astonishing skills would be a child who hears a song on the radio and then plays it perfectly on the piano – after hearing it only once.

Professionals are not sure exactly what causes ASD, but they do believe that genetics and environment can have an affect on a child's development. While there is no cure for ASD, there are various forms of treatment. These include one-on-one training sessions, counseling, medication, and therapy. It is estimated that three to six children out of every 1,000 will have some form of ASD, and males are four times more likely to have it than females.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. What does ASD stand for?
  - a. Autism Spectrum Disease
  - b. Autistic Special Disorder
  - c. Autism and Self-Awareness Discordance
  - d. Autism Spectrum Disorder
  
2. True or False: Because ASD is considered a spectrum disorder, some people experience very mild cases.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
3. The earliest cases of autism have been discovered when a child is:
  - a. In the womb
  - b. In infancy
  - c. A toddler
  - d. A pre-schooler
  
4. A child with autism is most likely to engage in:
  - a. Repetitive behavior, such as rocking back and forth.
  - b. Social interactions and games.
  - c. A conversation with an adult.
  - d. Extreme risk-taking.
  
5. It is estimated that:
  - a. Between 4 and 9 children out of every 1000 have some form of ASD.
  - b. Between 30 and 60 children out of every 1000 have some form of ASD.
  - c. Between 3 and 6 children out of every 1000 have some form of ASD.
  - d. Between 1.5 and 3 children out of every 1000 have some form of ASD.
  
6. It is believed that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ play roles in whether a child will develop ASD:
  - a. Ethnicity and Socio-economic class
  - b. Genetics and Environment
  - c. Diet and Exercise
  - d. Education and Self-Esteem
  
7. Which of the following statements is correct?
  - a. Males are more likely to develop autism than females.
  - b. Females are more likely to develop autism than males.
  - c. Males and females are equally likely to develop autism.
  - d. Gender has no bearing on whether an individual is likely to develop autism.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Short Answer Questions**

1. What is an "autistic savant"?
2. A young couple brings their infant to the doctor's office. They are sure their child is deaf, because he does not respond to them when they say his name or attempt to interact with him. What might the doctor suspect?
3. Is there a cure for ASD? Explain.
4. What is the most extreme form of ASD?
5. List four indicators that an infant may have some form of ASD.
6. What is an example of a social cue?
7. Do children with autism understand social cues?

ANSWER KEY:

Multiple Choice:

1. D
2. A
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. B
7. A

Short Answer:

1. An autistic savant is an autistic child with an amazing skill.
2. The doctor would likely suspect that the child could have autism.
3. There is no cure for ASD, but there are various forms of treatment. These include one-on-one training sessions, counseling, medication, and therapy.
4. Autism is the most extreme form of ASD.
5. Any four of the following is correct: no response to name, poor eye contact, excessive lining up of toys, no social responsiveness, no babbling or pointing by age one, and no single words by age 16 months.
6. Examples of social cues include facial expressions and tones of voice.
7. No, children with autism do not usually understand social cues.