

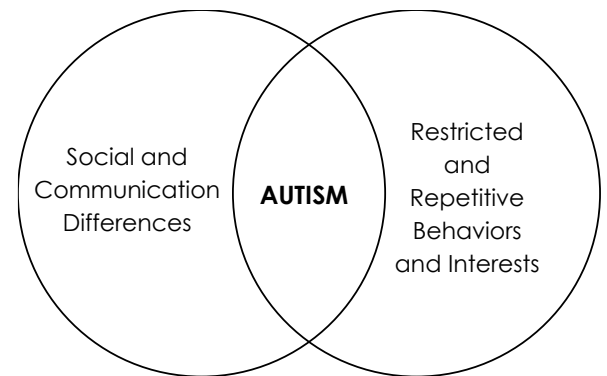


Children's National®

Autism

What is autism?

Autism is a name for a pattern of brain-based differences in how a person experiences and interacts with their environment. Autistic people have differences in how they socialize and communicate ("social and communication differences") AND in the way they react to changes and deal with sensory experiences like loud noises and bright lights ("restricted and repetitive behaviors and interests").



What does autism look like?

Like all people, autistic people are individuals. Some autistic people are happy to spend more time alone, and some people are very sociable and outgoing. Some autistic people speak to communicate, and some use signs, or a device, or behavior to communicate. Some autistic people have passionate interests that become their life's work. Some move differently and find joy or relaxation in movements like flapping their hands or walking on their tiptoes. All autistic people experience love, joy, loneliness, sadness, pain, and every other emotion, but they may have a unique way of showing how they are feeling. There is not one way to be autistic, like there is not one way to be human.

What does an autism diagnosis mean for my child?

Your child is still the same amazing and unique person no matter what labels they are given. Being diagnosed with autism does not put any limitations on what they can do. An autism diagnosis means that a professional thinks that certain therapies, teaching strategies, and parenting techniques may help your child reach their full potential. Without an autism diagnosis from a medical or mental health provider and an autism classification at school, your child may not get access to all of the services that would benefit them.

Where can I find out more?

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\) | Autism | NCBDDD | CDC](#)
- Children's National Center for Autism [Resources for Families - Autism Spectrum Disorders | Children's National Hospital \(childrensnational.org\)](#)
- Vanderbilt TRIAD Families First [Families First Program - Vanderbilt TRIAD Free Autism Services in Tennessee \(vumc.org\)](#)
- the Autistic Self Advocacy Network: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/about-autism/>
- Neurodivergent Narwhals: <https://neurodiversitylibrary.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/the-signs-of-autism.pdf>

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