



Early signs of autism

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person's brain develops and functions. Prevalence studies conducted in the past five years have produced differing results, but taken together they suggest that about 1 in 40 people are on the autism spectrum. Autism is lifelong and can be found in people from every culture and all kinds of family backgrounds.

Every child grows and learns in their own way, but there are some signs that may suggest a child could be on the autism spectrum.

Our purpose a different brilliant®

Understanding, engaging
and celebrating the strengths,
interests and aspirations of people
on the autism spectrum.

The following are some possible indicators of autism in very young children (up to age 2.5 years).

Social communication and interaction

The child:

- has few words by 18–24 months or stops using words they have already learned.
- rarely looks at people's faces, avoids or doesn't sustain eye contact.
- doesn't seek comfort, attention, or interaction from parents/caregivers in expected ways.
- prefers to play alone.
- rarely uses common gestures such as waving goodbye, pointing, nodding or shaking their head for yes and no.
- may seem to be "in their own world".
- does not consistently imitate simple motor movements e.g. clapping hands, waving or making sounds.
- shows less interest in social games such as "peek-a-boo".
- may not turn or look when their name is called.
- has unusual speech patterns e.g. repetitive speech.

Behaviour and interests

The child:

- has strong or unusual interests or attachments.
- may engage in repetitive motor movements such as hand flapping, spinning, walking on tiptoes.
- prefers lining up or spinning toys instead of pretend or functional play.
- can become highly distressed by everyday sounds.
- demonstrates strong preferences or aversions to specific sensory experiences e.g. textures, smells, sights.

Early signs of autism



How is autism diagnosed?

Autism is diagnosed by a specialist psychologist, paediatrician or multi-disciplinary team. The process involves gathering information about the child's development and how they experience the world through observation, as well as input from parents, carers and where relevant, therapists or educators.

If a child receives a diagnosis of autism, the health professional will also note a level from 1 to 3 that describes the amount of support the child may need in daily life. Level 1 means less support is needed and Level 3 means more support. This can change over time as needs change.

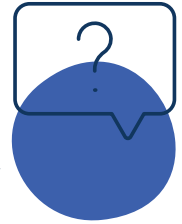
Getting support after diagnosis

When a child on the autism spectrum is diagnosed early, they can start receiving support sooner. Research suggests that earlier access to support can be linked with positive outcomes for some children, such as gains in cognitive, developmental, language, social and adaptive skills.

Consider support requirements

Support for young children can take different forms depending on their needs.

- **Formal supports** may include extra help at preschool, or access to therapy and early childhood services.
- **Informal supports** may involve encouragement and guidance from parents and teachers, as well as opportunities for families to attend information sessions and workshops.



Parents and carers often have a feeling that there are differences in their child's development compared to their peers, but can't put their finger on what these differences are. If you are concerned that your child is not reaching developmental milestones, or has lost skills that they once had, it is recommended that you consult your family GP or child health professional.

Based on the idea of a different brilliant®, Aspect's approach:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.