

## Information for Parents about Autism

<http://www.neurologychannel.com/patient-information-autism/index.shtml>

Autism is a neurological disorder that is usually diagnosed in children before the age of 3. Common signs of autism include problems with social skills, interaction, and communication; delayed language development; aggression; repetitive motions; and a narrow range of interests. Autistic children often have abnormal reactions to touch, smells, light, and sound, and learning disabilities.

Autism is a lifelong condition and the cause is unknown. Children with the disorder can benefit from occupational and physical therapy, behavior modification, communication therapy, and medications.

Here are some questions to ask your child's doctor (e.g., pediatrician, pediatric neurologist) about autism. **Print this page**, check off the questions you would like to have answered, and bring it with you to your child's next appointment. By learning more about autism, you can work with your child's health care team to develop an effective, long-term, autism treatment plan.

### Questions to Ask Your Child's Doctor about Autism

- Why do you think my child has autism?
- Might my child have another type of pervasive development disorder (PDD), such as Asperger's syndrome?
- Might genetic factors, environmental factors, or a viral infection be related to my child's condition?
- Might there be a connection between the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism? Are other childhood vaccines safe for my child?
- What screening and diagnostic tools will be used to evaluate my child's condition?
- What will these tests involve?
- Who will observe my child and assess his or her behavior?
- What will this specialist will be looking for?
- Will my child undergo diagnostic tests to check for metabolic, seizure, brain, or genetic disorders? If so, what do these tests involve?
- Will my child's hearing be tested?

- What can I do to help calm my child if he or she is frightened by procedures, such as blood tests, EEGs, or MRI scans?
- When can I expect the results of these tests?  
**Date:**
- Should I call for the results or will someone contact me?  
**Telephone number to call:**
- Who will explain my child's test results to me?
- What does the term "autism spectrum" mean in relation to my child's condition?
- What can I expect my child's daily life to be like?
- How can I help my other children, relatives, and friends understand autism?
- How can I help family members, friends, and others better relate to my child?
- How might my child interact with his or her caregivers and peers?
- Might my child need occupational therapy and/or physical therapy?
- What is my role in behavior modification? What should I be doing at home?
- How can I help my child communicate his or her needs? Where can I find helpful materials, like pictures?
- Do you recommend that I change my child's diet? Why or why not?
- Should my child avoid foods that contain gluten or casein?
- Should I increase my child's intake of vitamin B, magnesium, cod liver oil, and/or vitamin C?
- Do you recommend medications for my child?
- If so, why do you recommend these specific medications?
- What are the benefits, risks, and side effects associated with these medications?
- What should I do if my child experiences severe side effects?  
**Telephone number to call:**

- What is my child's prognosis?
  - What kind of education can I expect for my child?
  - Must my child be supervised at all times?
  - Do you expect he or she will be able to live independently as an adult?
  - What provisions should I make for my child if something should happen to my spouse and me?
  - Where can I learn more about autism? Can you recommend any books or online resources?
  - What current research is being conducted about autism?
  - Are there any local or online support groups for parents, siblings, and other family members of autistic children?
  - Are there any peer support groups that might benefit my child?
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**Notes/Additional Information**