

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



What is ASD?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition that lasts a lifetime.

It changes how a person thinks, communicates, and interacts with the world around them.

The word "spectrum" highlights how autism affects everyone differently. Each person on the spectrum has their own strengths and challenges.

People with ASD might find it hard to:

- Communicate or connect with others.
- Deal with certain smells, sounds, or textures.
- Cope with changes to routines or situations.

At the same time, many autistic people are great at remembering facts, thinking logically, or focusing on details.

What causes ASD?

ASD happens across all cultures, genders, and backgrounds.

The exact cause of ASD isn't fully understood, but it often runs in families.

Scientists believe ASD comes from a mix of genes and sometimes other factors like the environment. This combination might affect how the brain develops and functions.

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How do I feel / How do I look with ASD?

People with ASD can be talented in areas like technology, problem-solving, or creativity. But they may also find it harder to:

- Talk to others or express themselves.
- Understand social cues, like tone of voice or facial expressions.
- Cope with sensory experiences, such as loud noises or strong smells.

Some people on the spectrum might prefer routines and feel unsettled when things change unexpectedly.

Sadly, because people with ASD can act or think differently, they're sometimes misunderstood or judged unfairly.

Signs of ASD

ASD often starts showing signs in early childhood, but it looks different for everyone.

Some common signs include:

1. Difficulty with social interaction: Finding it hard to build relationships or read social situations.
2. Challenges with communication: Struggling with language or finding the right words to express themselves.
3. Repetitive behaviours or routines: Focusing intensely on specific interests or following set patterns.

Sometimes, girls with ASD are not diagnosed as quickly as boys because their signs might be less obvious or are masked by coping strategies.

How does the doctor know I have ASD?

If you, your family, or someone in your community thinks you might have ASD, it's important to yarn with your doctor or healthcare worker.

Your doctor might:

- Ask about your strengths, challenges, and daily life.
- Talk about your experiences at home, school, or work.
- Check your physical health to rule out other reasons for certain behaviours.

If needed, the doctor may refer you to a specialist (like a psychiatrist, psychologist, or paediatrician) for further support.

How can we support people with ASD?

ASD comes with both unique talents and challenges. With the right support, people with ASD can live happy and fulfilling lives.

Support can include:

- Therapies: Speech or Occupational Therapy to develop communication skills or cope with sensory issues.
- Yarning with a counsellor: To work on strategies that help with emotional and social challenges.
- Building routines: Clear and consistent routines can help make life more predictable and less stressful.
- Connecting with community: Sharing stories and experiences with others can reduce feelings of isolation and build understanding.

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