

Frequently asked Questions on Autism

1. What is Autism?

Autism is a condition characterized by impaired communication (Speech) skills, difficulty in social interaction and challenging behaviours.



2. How early can autism be recognized in children?

Unfortunately, there is no medical test to diagnose Autism. Autism is diagnosed by a team of professionals (Paediatrician, Speech Language Pathologist, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist) based on behavioural observations, speech and language skills and developmental milestones. Autism is commonly diagnosed by the age of 1.5 years.



3. Do childhood vaccines cause autism?

Research has shown that there is no link between Autism and measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine or any other childhood vaccinations.

4. What Are the Symptoms of Autism?

No two children with autism are the same. Each one of them have various symptoms with varying severity. Symptoms of Autism can be observed as early as 12-18 months of age. Symptoms include:

Normally developing children will start social smile by 3 months children with autism fails to show social smile even by 6 months.

- Typically developing children starts word level communication by 12-16 months. Lack of one words communication by 16 months can be considered warning sign for autism.
- Unusual attachment to one particular toy or object
- Not responding to sounds, voices, or name
- Lack of gestures such as pointing and showing
- Having trouble in social interactions, finding it difficult to interact with others/peers and make friends.



- Difficulty expressing their emotions and in understanding others emotions.
- Exhibiting aggressive behaviour at times (Head-banging, hair-pulling and biting themselves).
- Repetitive behaviours such as hand flapping, rocking back and forth, toe walking are all common features seen in children with autism.



- Abnormal reactions to certain sensory stimuli, such as intolerance to certain sounds or smell or excessive preferences to certain textures or taste may be observed.
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- Speech and language skills are affected in children with autism but the extend and severity may vary

5. Who Develops Autism?

Autism is common these days and can be found in all culture, ethnic groups and in all socio economic groups. Boys are more affected than girls. This condition is more commonly seen in boys than in girls.

6. What are the causes of Autism?

Specific causes of autism are not identified yet

- A combination of genetic, biological and environmental factors is believed to cause Autism.
- Researchers are being conducted to identify specific genes and brain regions involved are linked to the disorder.

7. How is autism treated?

Unfortunately, there is no medical line of treatment for autism. Treatment generally involves a team of professionals who are simultaneously working together for best outcome.

- **Speech language pathologist:** To test and improve speech and language abilities



- **Psychologist:** To improve social skills, emotional and anxiety regulation.
- **Occupational therapist:** Helps with sensory issues, play skills, and to improve self-help skills



- **Special Educator:** To get assistance in academic skills.

Each individual with autism is different, so treatment plans are custom made for each child based on their need.

8. What Should Parents Do If They Think Their Child Has Autism?

If parents suspect that their child has autism, they should immediately consult paediatrician, speech language pathologist or psychologist to diagnosis the child's condition. Autism is a lifelong disorder that affects each individual differently. Getting proper diagnosis and treatment at the earliest will help the child to acquire skills to thrive in community.

9. Can children with Autism lead a normal life? Can they go to school?

Early identification and rehabilitation is the key in effective management of autism. Early multidisciplinary rehabilitation can help to manage their behavioural symptoms, sensory issues as well as improve their communication (speech and gestures) skills. Children with

Autism can attend normal school with proper rehabilitation and with the support of parents and teachers.



FOR MORE DETAILS



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