

# The



# of AUTISM

## What are Autism Spectrum Disorders?

Autism is a developmental disorder characterized by deficits in social interaction and language use, as well as the presence of repetitive behaviors and other symptoms. Because these core characteristics present to varying degrees in different individuals, autism is considered to occur along a spectrum, which refers to the wide range of symptoms and levels of disability (from mild to severe) people with autism can exhibit.

## Did You Know?

It is estimated that more than **1** in every **100** individuals in the U.S. is on the autism spectrum.

This translates into over **3 million** children and adults in the U.S. who are living with autism spectrum disorders.

## Did You Know?

The younger siblings of individuals with autism have a 15-20 percent risk of developing the condition.

Autism is a lifelong condition, and challenges persist throughout life.

## RISK FACTORS for Autism

Because autism spectrum disorders most frequently appear to result from genetic mutations, autism tends to run in families. Boys are 4-5 times more likely to develop autism than girls.

## SYMPTOMS of Autism

Autism spectrum disorder symptoms appear before the age of three and include the following:

- Social and language deficits (such as failure to respond to social cues with reactions, including smiling or making eye contact)
- Repetitive behaviors (such as hand flapping, rocking, or lining up objects)
- Unusual interests or preoccupations (such as memorizing every stop on a bus line)

## TREATMENTS for Autism

The earlier an autism spectrum disorder is diagnosed and treated, the more successful the response. Traditional treatments include the following:

- Behavioral therapy provided by a trained specialist (and reinforced at home) can markedly improve a child's social, learning, and language skills.
- Medications can help some of the symptoms associated with autism, including hyperactivity and irritability.

## Autism Research

Scientists have been working to identify the genes of autism and are moving toward the goal of developing new medications to target specific genetic mutations. Brain imaging can augment diagnosis and may accelerate treatment. Combining behavioral and medical treatment may improve response.

## What Parents Can Do

1. Go for well baby checkups at birth and 2 weeks, then at months 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, and 24.
2. Make sure to have an autism screening at 18 and 24 months to ensure early diagnosis and therapy.
3. Visit an expert autism center where specialists are at the leading edge of treatment and research.