

AUTISM AND ITS SYMPTOMS

Q: What is autism?

A: Autism is a developmental disability that affects each individual differently. It's the result of a neurological disorder that impacts brain development in the areas of social interaction and communication.*

Q: What are the symptoms?

A: They range from slight delays in language with greater social challenges, to difficulty conversing and, in some cases, aggressive and/or self-injurious behavior. Other traits may include: insistence on sameness, repeating words, preference for solitude, little fear of danger, ignoring verbal cues and being unresponsive to normal teaching methods.*

Q: How do autism and Asperger's syndrome differ?

A: Asperger's is a form of autism. There is no speech delay, though speech patterns may lack inflection, have a rhythmic nature or be loud or high-pitched. Another distinction concerns cognitive ability. While some people with autism have mental retardation, those with Asperger's usually have average to above-average intelligence.*

Q: What can ease the symptoms?

A: Research shows that early intervention yields great progress in children by the time they enter kindergarten, often reducing the need for intensive supports.*

Q: Why is autism on the rise?

A: Mainly because of changes in diagnoses. Once identified as having anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, delayed language, mental retardation or learning disabilities, many children are now placed on the "autism spectrum." Between 2004 and 2007, as autism enrollment in California schools rose by 57 percent, enrollment of "learning disabled" children fell by 9 percent, and enrollment of "mentally retarded" children fell by 3 percent. Other possible causes for the increase have yet to be confirmed.**

Sources:

*Autism Society of America

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/07/13/BAFH103EEM.DTL>

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