

# AUTISM - Learn the Facts

## EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM



**Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), commonly referred to as autism, is a brain-based developmental disability characterized by impaired social communication and interaction, and restricted, repetitive behaviors, interests or activities.**

- ◆ Autism is estimated to affect 1 in every 59 children in the United States; 1 in every 37 boys; 1 in every 151 girls.
- ◆ No two individuals with autism are the same. There is a wide spectrum of symptoms that range from mild to severe.
- ◆ Autism occurs in children of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- ◆ Autism may be accompanied by language impairment and/or intellectual disability.
- ◆ The causes of autism are unclear. Research suggests that the causes are complex and may include genetic, biological, and environmental risk factors.
- ◆ Increased prevalence in autism has been influenced by greater awareness, improved expertise in diagnosis, and an expanded definition. However, a true increase in the number of children with autism cannot be ruled out.

- ◆ Symptoms of autism can often be detected at 18 months or earlier, and some of the early signs may even be recognizable within the first year of life.
- ◆ When parents first suspect their child is developing differently, they should discuss their concerns with their pediatrician and ask for an autism screening, or referral to a qualified autism professional.
- ◆ Early identification and intensive early intervention can result in significant positive outcomes for many children with autism.
- ◆ Individuals with autism can make gains throughout their lives with the support of evidence-based educational and therapeutic programs tailored to meet their challenges and strengths.
- ◆ 84% of individuals with autism in California are under the age of 22. There is a significant need for services to help young people successfully transition to adulthood with the greatest levels of independence possible.

**Important history is in the making for autism as science, public policy, advocacy, best practices in education and treatment, and awareness efforts expand and intensify. Advances in these areas will improve the quality of life for individuals with autism and their families.**

### BY 4 MONTHS OF AGE

- Does not make eye contact or makes little eye contact
- Does not seem interested in other people
- Does not show as much interest in people as objects
- Does not react by looking at people when they are making "social sounds," such as humming or clapping
- Does not have a social smile (does not smile back at someone who smiles at them)
- Does not show interest in watching people's faces

### BY 12 MONTHS OF AGE

- Does not combine eye contact with smiling
- Does not babble (or the babble doesn't sound like "talking")
- Does not look where another person is pointing
- Does not try to engage other people in what he or she is looking at or doing
- Does not engage in interactive gestures, such as giving, showing or reaching for parents
- Does not respond when his or her name is called
- Does not show a caring or concerned reaction to other people crying or in distress
- Does not use gestures, such as waving "hi" or "bye," or use the index finger to point

### BY 24 MONTHS OF AGE

- Does not look toward an object that is pointed to
- Does not point to share interests with others, such as pointing to an appealing toy
- Does not imitate common activities of others, such as sweeping the floor
- Does not learn simple, new interactive routines
- Does not develop pretend or make-believe play, such as feeding a doll
- Does not use single words by 16 months
- Does not spontaneously use meaningful two-word phrases ("go car" or "look doggie") by 24 months