

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASD)



What is?

The Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) refers to a group of developmental disabilities characterized by problems with communication and social interaction, repetitive behaviors and activities, or specific interests. The level of severity varies among the people with ASD and is more commonly diagnosed in males during pre-school stage.

Causes

There is no specific cause for ASD, due to its complexity of presenting signs and symptoms. Some of the factors to consider are:

- **Genetics:** alterations in specific genes.
- **Environmental factors:** it is currently being studied whether complications during pregnancy, infections or medications can trigger ASD.

Indicators

- Poor eye contact
- Does not respond to his name (9 months +)
- Lack of facial expressions (9 months +)
- Few interactive games (12 months +)
- Few or no gestures (12 months+)
- Does not share interests with others (15 months +)
- Does not point out interesting objects (18 months +)
- No discomfort or pain when hurt (24 months +)

Diagnosis

There is no exact test for diagnosis. A human behavior specialist must evaluate the child's development and behavior to set the course to follow. An early diagnosis helps the child to receive the services and supports they need to bring that child to his or her full potential.

Treatment

There are several types of treatments since ASD does not have a cure, but rather the symptoms are treated for daily functioning and quality of life. This child will require a multidisciplinary team consisting of his or her physician, psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapists (if the patient has a motor problem), nutritionists, health educators, among other professionals.

Reminder:

Early intervention is essential to achieve optimal development of children with ASD.



For more information, please contact the Preventive & Educational Community Services Unit at **787.277.6571**



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