

# Characteristics

Every person with autism is different. However, there are some common characteristics of individuals with autism that may occur.

Remember that although these are some common characteristics no two persons with autism experience the world or behave in the same way.

- Difficulty in using and understanding language.
- Poorly developed social skills and unusual play with toys.
- Over or under sensitivity to sound, sight, taste, touch, or smell.
- Repetitive behaviors such as spinning objects or rocking.
- Difficulty with changes to surroundings or routines.
- Certain behaviors exhibited to stimulate the senses, such as switching a light on and off repeatedly, or humming loudly.
- Uneven skill development. Some skills are normal or superior for their age while others show significant delay.
- Challenging behaviors such as aggression, self injury or severe withdrawal.



## *Florida's First Choice for Autism Support*

The Center for Autism & Related Disabilities (CARD) provides support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism and related disabilities.

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# What is AUTISM?

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Autism is a lifelong neurological disability that affects a person's ability to communicate, understand language, play and socially interact with others. The first signs of autism usually appear as developmental delays before age three.

Autism is classified as a developmental disability because it interferes with the typical rate and patterns of childhood development.

There are diagnoses closely related to autism such as PDD-NOS (pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified), Asperger's Disorder, and Rett's Disorder that are included in the category of Autism Spectrum Disorder.



## Causes

Nobody knows what causes autism. Some scientists believe there is a biological cause that affects the working of the brain, but this has not been proven. It is possible there are many factors that could interact with one another which could cause different characteristics in each individual with autism. Researchers are working hard to find the cause(s) of autism.

Parents do not cause autism. No factors in a child's experiences or in parenting styles are responsible for autism.

## Facts

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Autism Spectrum Disorder occurs in about 1 of every 150 births, and four times more often in boys than girls. Families of all racial, ethnic and social backgrounds anywhere in the world are affected.

Autism occurs by itself, with mental retardation, mental health issues or with other health problems, such as epilepsy, viral infections, or changes in a person's growth rate metabolism.

## Treatment

Treatment and educational needs for people with autism and related disabilities should include:

- 1) Early and accurate diagnosis increases the child's opportunity for positive development and success.
- 2) Professional services for persons with autism may include speech and occupational therapy and require a cooperative effort between professionals and families.
- 3) Generally, persons with autism seem to make the best progress when they are in as typical a setting as possible and provided with individualized support and therapy to meet their needs.
- 4) By implementing best practices in all areas of life, progress in persons with autism can be optimized.

## Summary

Autism can be a complex disorder. But, it is not hopeless. With the help of good intervention and services, individuals with autism can make excellent progress and achieve a higher quality of life.