

EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

BY 4 MONTHS OF AGE

- Does not make eye contact or makes little eye contact
- Does not seem interested in other people
- Does not react by looking at people when they are making social "sounds," such as humming or clapping
- Does not show as much interest in people as objects
- 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 at objects that another person is looking at
- 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
- 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

OTHER EARLY SIGNS

- Experiences a significant loss of language or social skills that he or she once had
- Echoes what others say (echolalia) without regular spontaneous speech
- Demonstrates speech that sounds mechanical, almost robotic
- Uses limited or atypical facial expressions
- Prefers to play alone or does not show interest in other children
- May not enjoy cuddling or being touched, unless it is on his or her own terms
- Displays repetitive body movements (hand flapping, spinning)
- Fixates upon a single object, such as a spoon or book
- Cannot tolerate change in routine or environment, such as a new toothbrush or a replacement for a lost toy
- Unusual response to sensory experiences (light, texture, sound, taste, smell, movement)
- Lines items up or puts things in order, repeatedly
- Has excessive tantrums and is difficult to console
- Walks on tiptoes
- Unusual eating & sleeping habits
- Gives unrelated answers to questions

The presence of any one or a combination of these early signs does not necessarily mean that your child has an autism spectrum disorder. If your child demonstrates any of these signs, please discuss your concerns with your pediatrician and ask for an autism screening.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS FAST FACTS

- Autism spectrum disorders (ASD), commonly referred to as autism, are brain-based developmental disabilities characterized by language/communication problems, impaired social interaction, and repetitive, rigid behaviors and interests.
- The symptoms of ASD vary widely from child to child and range from mild to severe.
- ASD are now estimated to affect 1 in every 110 children in the United States.
- ASD are four times more common in boys than in girls, and occur in children of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Symptoms can often be detected by 18 months of age or earlier. When parents first suspect that early signs of autism may be present, they should discuss these concerns with their pediatrician and ask for an autism screening.
- Research indicates that early identification and intensive early intervention can result in significant positive outcomes for many children with ASD.