

WHEN DOES A CHILD EXHIBIT SYMPTOMS OF AUTISM?



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Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a developmental disorder, can be detected as early as infancy. The behavioral symptoms become more significant by the age of 12 to 18 months. Listed below are some of the early signs of Autism:

- Difficulty to make eye contact
- Non-responsiveness when being called
- Difficulty to focus and pay attention when pointed at an object or person
- Struggle to participate in pretend plays
- Fail to convey or understand non-verbal communication

The symptoms of Autism often go unnoticed by the parents. It is only when the child does not start talking at the ideal age, autism is suspected.

Although the parents and caregivers do often catch some minor developmental lag and abnormalities, in most cases, the children are not diagnosed with Autism until after the age of 3.

However, studies have proven that Autism can be managed successfully to a great extent if these symptoms are caught and diagnosed at the early stage of a child and then taken appropriate intervention steps.

REGRESSION



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One of the characteristic symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder is Regression. In the regressive type, the child tends to withdraw from playing, using language and social interactions. These symptoms appear between the ages of 12 and 24 months. The diminishing skills may be detected at the early stages too. It is crucial to render an early diagnosis and thereby intervene through therapies to treat regression in ASD. It is still ambiguous as to why and which child is likely to regress.

EARLY SIGNS OF ASD



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Among the other early signs of ASD are the biological signs. Studies reveal that autistic individuals have a rare and exclusive brain functioning, convolutions and connections. The difference in brain structures and development is seen as early as 6 months.

The characteristics of ASD are grouped into three types and they are also called 'The Triad of Impairment.'

- **Social Interaction:** Many **children with ASD** may show deficit or impairment in social development i.e. may have impairment in developing appropriate social skills. Thus children could display problems in greeting, empathizing as well as sympathizing with others.
- **Communication and language:** Some children may be able to talk in detail about their preferred topic but may draw blank when they need to ask for a basic need such as going to the toilet or when asked a specific question.

They may also display problems in simple turn-taking, waiting or following another person's thought process.

- **Rigidity in Thought and Behaviour:** Many children with ASD may show obsessive behavior, weak central coherence, and difficulty in imagination. Thus the child with Autism Spectrum Disorder could feel disturbed when some routines are suddenly changed.

TREATMENT FOR ASD

We believe that no single treatment is best and treatment is typically customized to the child's needs. Here are some available approaches included:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)
- Structured Teaching (e.g. the TEACCH program)
- **Speech & Language Therapy**
- Communication Interventions
- Social Skills Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS)



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CONCLUSION



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