



AUTISM FACTS

DEFINITION

According to the diagnostic features described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by persistent impairment in reciprocal social communication and interaction, and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities present from early childhood that limit or impair everyday functioning.

SCREENINGS AND EVALUATIONS

- Assessment of Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS)
- Autism Diagnostic Interview – Revised (ADI-R)
- Autism Spectrum Rating Scales (ASRS)
- Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS)
- Gilliam Autism Rating Scale (GARS-2)
- Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Ed. (SRS-2)
- Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ)
- Social Skills Improvement System (SSiS)
- High Functioning Autism Spectrum Screening Questionnaire (ASSQ)

POSSIBLE CAUSES

Although no cure or cause has been identified, researchers are currently studying genetic, biologic, and environmental factors. Current research supports that early intervention paired with intensive therapies make a significant difference in improving the lives of individuals with autism.

INCIDENCE

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ASD affects around 1 in 54 children in the US and occurs in all socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups. ASD is 4 times more common in boys than girls.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Individuals with ASD typically have average intelligence, but exhibit deficits in social communication and interaction, and display restrictive behaviors. Individuals with ASD may exhibit the following characteristics ranging from mild to severe and are typically evident before the age of three:

- Verbal and non-verbal deficits; lack of speech or language delays; Repeating words or phrases (echolalia)
- Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships; Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity; inappropriate or lack of emotional responses
- Restrictive patterns of interest
- Repetitive behaviors or unusual body movements
- Difficulty adjusting to changes in routine or environments
- Hyper- or hypo-reactive to sensory input or stimuli

TEACHING TIPS/INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- Provide effective communication systems for students lacking communication (visuals, PECS, Augmentative Communication Devices)
- Provide hands-on activities and use student interests to engage learning
- Consistently use visual schedules and supports, especially for transitions
- Be as concrete and explicit as possible in your instructions and feedback to the student
- Use an interest inventory to determine what the student's strengths and interests are to guide instruction
- Use social stories, video modeling, and create opportunities for social interactions
- Use "If/Then" or "First/Next" strategy to pair a non-preferred activity with a preferred activity
- Teach expected behaviors for various environments using positive reinforcement. Other strategies to teach appropriate behavior include task analysis, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), video modeling
- Work together with the student's parents and other school personnel to create and implement an educational plan tailored to meet student's needs. Regularly share information about how the student is doing at school and at home
- Determine the need for therapies such as occupational, physical, speech/language, and behavior. Collaborate as a team with all related service providers

Contributing Resources:

- National Institute of Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov
- Autism Society of America
www.autism-society.org
- Autism Speaks
www.Autismspeaks.org
- Intervention Central (behavioral supports)
www.interventioncentral.org/
- Centers for Disease Control
www.CDC.gov

For more information contact:
Jennifer Anderson, NBCT
Coordinator- Autism Spectrum Disorders WVDE
jennifer.anderson@k12.wv.us

