

What is autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder. The main areas below show examples of behaviours that people with ASD may display.

Social communication and social interaction



May appear to be in their own world

- May avoid eye contact or have limited eye contact
- May fail to react to their name



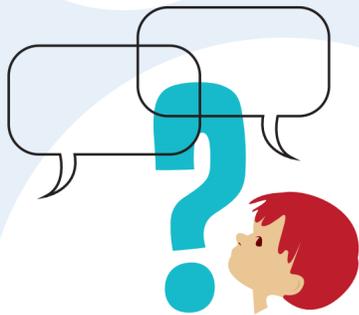
Need help to interact with others

- May prefer to be alone
- May want to participate, but not know how
- May have difficulties forming and maintaining relationships
- May initiate contact in an unusual manner



Difficulties “reading”/interpreting social signals or situations

- Difficulties understanding body language, facial expressions and tone of voice
- May need help understanding what is appropriate in different situations

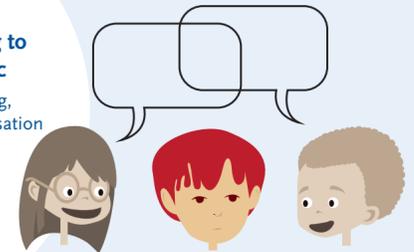


Need help with communication

- May have delayed or limited speech development
- May have a literal understanding of words
- May have a large vocabulary, but have difficulties with using language in a social situation

May have difficulties keeping to a topic and/or changing topic

- May experience difficulties starting, maintaining or finishing a conversation
- May have difficulties keeping to a topic



Behaviours, interests and activities



Repetitive movements and unusual speech

- Echolalia (repeating words and sentences)
- New words/idiosyncratic speech
- Hand-flapping, spinning or rocking



Repetitive behaviours

- May repeat the same action over and over again, e.g. lining up objects or watching the same video



Restricted field of interest

- May have an intense interest in a topic (e.g. trains)
- May have an interest that appears unusual (e.g. glue sticks)
- May have/show an unusually high level of interest in a topic, thinking or talking about it all the time

Prefer structure and routines

- May dislike surprises and react strongly to changes, whether large or small
- May need support to try something new



Under- or oversensitivity

- May have unusual reactions to what they see, hear, smell, touch or taste
- May have unusual reactions to pain



Common accompanying difficulties



Difficulties in regulating activity

- Hyperactivity
- Inactivity



Sleep problems

- May wake up multiple times every night
- May need less sleep



Difficulties with emotional regulation



Problems with food

- May react to consistency or colour of food
- May react when food is mixed together

