Autism

What is autism?

Autism is the most common form of the autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). It is a behavioral disorder that is diagnosed in early childhood in which the child has difficulty communicating with others; understanding surroundings, emotions, and word meanings; and often has an intense, focused interest in one specific thing. It is most common in boys.

What causes autism?

Despite much research, the causes of autism are not known, leaving parents in a predicament because they do not fully understand the disorder and how to help their autistic children.

Is there anything parents can do to help their child if diagnosed with autism?

- Tell your child’s physician about any symptoms of autism immediately to expedite diagnosis and treatment. Even ask to be referred to a specialist. If your physician is not willing to listen to your concerns and beliefs, find another physician who will work with you and your child.

- Set time aside each week to sit one-on-one with your child reading and exploring different toys to help the child’s ability to perceive new concepts. This should facilitate the child’s cognitive development.

- Allow your child to attend preschool to interact with other children. This should help with social skills.

- Attend parent workshops, and have a specialist come to your home to help you learn how to work with your child in an environment where you and your child are most comfortable.

Learn how to work with your autistic child at home.

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Additional information about this Fact Sheet may be obtained from:

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Are there any signs of autism that can help parents detect the disorder early in order to begin an early intervention program?

Watch your child play with other children on the playground at recess or at the park. Observe your child’s interaction with other children as social skills are developing even at play. If your child seems to differ greatly from the other children, it might be a good idea to visit a physician. The child could be diagnosed immediately giving you the opportunity to begin early intervention, or, even better, you may learn that your child is perfectly normal putting your mind at ease.

What is the overall recommendation of health care professionals who specialize in treating autism?

Early intervention seems to be the key to improvements in autistic children, so start working to help your child as soon as possible.

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