



## Indicators for Autism Spectrum Disorder

The degree of severity differs from person to person, but these are common characteristics in someone with an Autism Spectrum Disorder\*:

### **Significant delays in language**

- Verbal language is slow to develop and some individuals are non-verbal
- May exhibit peculiar speech patterns or use of words without their normal meaning
- May use unusual metaphors or speak in a formal and monotone voice

### **Significant delays in understanding social relationships**

- Often avoids eye contact, resists being picked up, and may seem to “tune out” the world
- Lack of cooperative play with peers, impaired ability to develop friendships, difficulty in understanding other people’s feelings

### **Inconsistent patterns of sensory responses**

- May appear to be deaf at times and fail to respond to words or other sounds
- At other times, may be extremely distressed by an everyday noise such as a vacuum cleaner or a dog’s barking
- May show an apparent insensitivity to pain and a lack of responsiveness to cold/heat or touch, or may overreact to these sensations

### **Uneven patterns of intellectual functioning**

- May have special skills such as drawing, music, memorizing facts, or math skills, while challenged by everyday life skills such as shoe tying, using eating utensils, toilet training, etc.
- May have average or above average intelligence while others may have some degree of mental retardation

### **Marked restriction of activity and interests**

- May perform repetitive body movements, such as hand flicking, twisting, spinning, or rocking
- Often display repetition by following the same schedule every day, the same order of doing tasks such as dressing, waking or mealtimes
- May become very distressed by changes in routine
- Often will develop obsessions about certain topics or people

*\*Adapted from the University of North Carolina School of Medicine at Chapel Hill [TEACCH](#) program.*