



SDUAHER Public Education Series

UNCOVERING



Handout for parents

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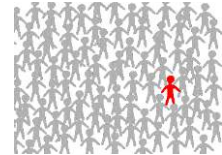
M Jayaram

What is Autism?

Autism, now referred to as “autism spectrum disorders (ASDs)” is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that affects essential human behaviours such as ability to develop social relationships, ability to communicate ideas and feelings, imagination, and self-regulation. The severity of symptoms and the sequel of ASD vary from person to person.

What percentage of children is affected with autism?

The prevalence of ASD is 1 in 125 in children 3-6 years and 1 in 85 in children 6-9 years of age.



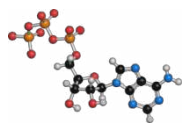
What causes autism?

There is no one single factor that leads to autism. The complexity of the disorder and the symptom presentation in different individuals who are affected suggests that multiple factors cause autism.



Researchers believe that there are several genes involved in autism. The condition is likely to be hereditary.

Children born to older parents – pregnancy after 35 years - are at risk.



Abnormal chemical reactions in the leading to metabolic imbalances

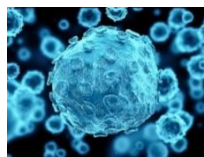
Socially isolated from his peer groups from a young age – more screen time (mobiles and television), or neglected by family members for some reason.



involved in parents and



Foetal exposure to heavy metals and environmental toxins.



History of viral infections during pregnancy / delivery



Foetal exposure to certain medicines.

What are the characteristics of autism?



Problems in social interaction. Turn-taking in speech, work and/or play is affected. Poor eye contact.

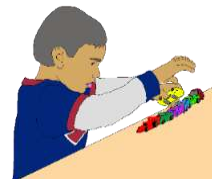


Unusual interest in rotating objects (gazing at fan).



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

Insisting on sameness – cannot easily accept a change in routine, or a new thing.



Under or over reaction to one or more of the five senses: sight, touch, taste, smell, or hearing



Delay in speech and language development. The child affected with autism may show one or more of these characteristics: Inability to develop speech-language skills, poor comprehension, unable to perceive the internal meaning of an expression, poor/no pragmatics, inability to understand jokes, inability to understand time concept and exceptional development of some aspect of language.



Staring at walls without any particular reason.



Echolalia (repeats what he/she hears immediately or with a delay).



Repetitively continues with the same speech, actions and/or body movement.



Self-injurious behaviour such as head banging, biting or slapping his own face.



Unusual emotional reactions and expressions.



Exceptional talent like being good in arithmetic or painting or music.



Impaired memory and/or cognitive abilities

Tendency to give importance to minor aspects of a thing like unusually worried about a screw or a part that is protruding in a toy bus or aeroplane.

What are the other associated conditions which can be seen along with autism?

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder– difficulty in paying attention; hyperactive and impulsive behaviour.
- Sensory processing disorder – difficulty in understanding sensory information like texture, not paying attention to verbal instructions.
- Mental retardation – difficulty in thinking, poor cognitive abilities and difficulty in understanding concepts.
- Anxiety disorders
- Depressive disorders
- Developmental co-ordination disorder – difficulty with movement and coordination.
- Blindness – complete or partial loss of vision.

When can this condition be seen in children for the first time?

It can be observed as early as 18 to 24 months. However, it is usually not diagnosed before the age of 3.

How to diagnose autism?

At first glance, some people with autism may appear to have an intellectual disability, sensory processing issues, or problems with hearing or vision. Doctors and rehabilitation experts will check for the child's developmental milestones, language, cognitive skills, his ability to develop social relationships, risk factors present, and adaptability, and see if the level of the child on these characteristics is appropriate to his/her age. One or more of these specialists - paediatricians, neurologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and speech-language pathologists – can identify the condition of ASD.



Can autism be cured?

There is no “cure” for autism, but speech and behaviour therapy and other treatment considerations can significantly improve the child’s functioning in which he/she is deficient/deviant. A medical specialist may decide if any medication is indicated particularly for associated conditions. Most of the times, long-term and continuous training will bring about significant improvement in the child’s abilities and/or alleviate some symptoms.

Who are the professionals involved in treating autism?

The health-care needs of people with ASD are complex and require a range of integrated services, including health promotion, care, rehabilitation, and collaboration with other sectors such as education, employment and social care.



Speech therapist works to improve the verbal, non-verbal, and social communication skills. Music may be used as a channel of teaching during therapy as children with ASD respond better to therapy.

Occupational therapist improves the sensory-motor integration, activities of daily living and motor skills (like writing).



Clinical psychologist works on deviant behaviour including hyperactivity that interferes with learning.

Physiotherapist works on developing motor skills and improving power of muscles, posture and balance.



Neurologists treat associated medical conditions like seizures, head injury, and its sequel.

Psychiatrists treat disorders of thinking, feelings, other comorbid conditions and/or behaviour.



Paediatricians identify at-risk children through screening tests and health maintenance visits, treat comorbid medical conditions, generally responsible for the health of children, and make appropriate referrals.

Primary care provider recognizes the symptoms of ASD, makes appropriate referrals to specialists and implements suggestions of specialists for the child at community level.

What is the prognosis for the child if provided early intervention?

- Can develop better social skills.
- Can develop speech-language skills.
- Can communicate his needs accordingly through verbal or non-verbal means.
- Can develop the ability to comprehend verbal instructions.
- Can develop good pragmatics in social behaviour and language.
- Can overcome sensory issues.
- Can go on to normal school.
- Can develop control on his hyperactive behaviour.
- Can show significant improvement in the comorbid medical conditions.



What will happen if the condition is left untreated or unattended to?

Children with ASD often impose significant emotional and economic burden on their families.

If untreated, children with ASD will

- not develop language, its use as well as understanding,
- not develop effective social skills, or learn appropriate behaviour,
- have problem in living independently at a later stage in their life,
- have difficulty in participating in social events, and
- not reach educational, social and employment goals.

How to provide a better quality of life to them?

We can provide better quality of life to people with autism by

- making them feel respected by those around them,
- welcoming them to participate actively in their schools, workplaces and communities,
- letting them express themselves and to interact with others in a meaningful way,
- providing them access to the services they need to stay healthy,
- making them feel secure and to get help from their communities, law enforcement and others as needed,

- providing an opportunity to participate in school to their fullest capability and enable an environment for them to learn in a manner that helps them to succeed,
- befriending and supporting them to build ties with their communities,
- supporting them to lead their own lives,
- providing opportunity to work and help avail compensation befitting their positions,
- helping them pursue their interests and spend their free time in a meaningful way,
- providing opportunities to appreciate themselves, and feel understood and valued by others,
- giving them opportunities to make their own decisions, and
- empowering them to achieve their aspirations.



How can we prevent autism?

Exact methods of prevention of autism are not known. However, one can increase the odds of having a healthy baby by bringing about changes in their lifestyles as follows:

- Live healthy by consuming proper food, drinking clean water and staying in a clean environment. Have regular check-ups, eat well-balanced meals, and exercise. Make sure that the pregnant mother gets good prenatal care, and takes all recommended vitamins and supplements.
- Make sure that the expectant mothers get proper treatment for existing health conditions.
- The expectant mothers as well as the new born babies should be vaccinated at appropriate times. Women in reproductive age should make sure that they get vaccine for German measles (rubella) before they get pregnant. It can prevent rubella-associated autism.
- Enriching the exceptional talents of children like painting, or music or writing skills. Help them to express themselves.
- Make sure that the child gets to interact with other children as well as elders so that their socialization skills develop right from a young age.



What are the facilities available for children with autism?

National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities, a statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India has a number of schemes for children with ASD like

- a) Niramaya Scheme (Health Insurance Policy) in association with ICICI Lombard, which provides a health insurance cover of up to Rs.1,00,000/- for the welfare of persons with ASD and other disabilities. It covers the following services:
 - Surgery to prevent further aggravation of disability
 - Corrective surgeries for existing disability

- Hospitalization
- OPD treatment
- Regular medical check-up
- Dental preventive dentistry
- Ongoing therapies
- Alternative medicine
- Transportation costs

b) Gharaunda scheme. This scheme aims at setting up Gharaunda Centres for life long shelter and care of Persons with Disability covered under the National Trust Act.



c) Disha scheme. This scheme aims at setting up Disha Centres for early intervention for Person with Disability in 0-10 years of age covered under the National Trust Act, through therapies, trainings and providing support to family members.



Visit <http://thenationaltrust.gov.in/content/innerpage/schemes.php> for additional information on the schemes.

In order to avail the above schemes and benefits provided by the Government through its various Ministries and their Departments, one must have the Unique Disability Identity (UDID) card / Disability Certificate.

Visit <http://www.swavlambancard.gov.in/> for additional information.

All facilities available for persons with disabilities under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 are also available for persons with ASD. Some of them are:

- PwDs shall have reasonable accommodation.
- Educational institutions recognised/funded by the govt. shall provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities.
- Schemes and programmes which includes provision of loans at concessional rates to facilitate and support employment of persons with disabilities shall be formulated by the respective Government.
- The appropriate Government and local authorities shall ensure that every child with benchmark disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of eighteen years.
- Free education to every child with benchmark disability till the age of 18 years shall be ensured by the appropriate Government.



Visit <http://www.tezu.ernet.in/PwD/RPWD-ACT-2016.pdf> for additional information.

Where can you avail services for children with autism?

You can avail services for your child with autism at the department of Speech Pathology and Audiology, Sri Devaraj Urs Academy of Higher Education and Research (SDUAHER), Tamaka, Kolar. The department is housed in the 4th floor of CARE building of the academy.

What are the facilities available at our centre?

The department of Speech Pathology and Audiology has state of the art infrastructure and facilities for evaluation and management of communication disorders. As the University has a hospital attached to it, one can also get the services of a paediatrician, psychologist, psychiatrist and physiotherapist under the same shelter.





For further details contact:

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