

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

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[NIMH Home](#)[Health & Outreach](#)[Research Funding](#)[Science News](#)[About NIMH](#)[Back to: NIMH Home » Health & Outreach » Mental Health Topics](#)

Autism Spectrum Disorders (Pervasive Developmental Disorders)

What are Autism Spectrum Disorders?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), also known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDDs), cause severe and pervasive impairment in thinking, feeling, language, and the ability to relate to others. These disorders are usually first diagnosed in early childhood and range from a severe form, called autistic disorder, through pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), to a much milder form, Asperger syndrome. They also include two rare disorders, Rett syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder.

[More about Autism »](#)

Signs & Symptoms

Parents are usually the first to notice unusual behaviors in their child. In some cases, the baby seemed "different" from birth, unresponsive to people or focusing intently on one item for long periods of time. The first signs of an autism spectrum disorder can also appear in children who had been developing normally. When an affectionate, babbling toddler suddenly becomes silent, withdrawn, self-abusive, or indifferent to social overtures, something is wrong.

[More about Signs & Symptoms »](#)

Treatment

There is no single best treatment package for all children with ASD. Decisions about the best treatment, or combination of treatments, should be made by the parents with the assistance of a trusted expert diagnostic team.

[More about Treatment »](#)

Getting Help: Locate Services

Locate mental health services in your area, affordable healthcare, NIMH clinical trials, and listings of professionals and organizations.

[More about Locating Services »](#)

Related Information

[Treatment of Children with Mental Disorders](#)

[Information about medications](#)

[Autism Spectrum Disorders Information and Organizations from](#)

[NLM's MedlinePlus \(en Español\)](#)

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Autism Information](#)

Science News about Autism

[Autism Skews Developing Brain with Synchronous Motion and Sound](#)

[Rising to the Challenge: NIH Will Use \\$60 Million in Recovery Act Funds to Support Strategic Autism Research](#)

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Featured Publications about Autism

[Autism Spectrum Disorders \(Pervasive Developmental Disorders\)](#)

A detailed booklet that describes Autism symptoms, causes, and treatments, with information on getting help and coping
Date: 2004

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