

Autism information and quiz

Autism is a complex neurobiological condition which can present differently in different people depending on where they are on the autistic spectrum. It is generally characterised by difficulty with social communication, finding busy environments overwhelming and a need to soothe with repetitive behaviours or language. The symptoms can be less easy to spot or 'skewed' by co-occurring conditions (eg ADHD) but early symptoms *can* include delayed speech, restricted (but intense) interests, not responding to his or her name and struggling with eye contact or socialising with others. No two autistic children will have the same symptoms. Warning signs might be easy to see in one person, and virtually invisible in another. Typical symptoms of autism include:

- *Not seeming to understand what others are thinking or feeling or misinterpreting behaviours.*
- *Finding busy or noisy environments overwhelming and needing regular time alone to 'reset' and feel calm again.*
- *Having a strong grasp of minute details and patterns but not necessarily the bigger picture.*
- *Unusual speech such as repeating phrases, talking 'at' others or interrupting without realising this might be rude.*
- *Liking a strict daily routine and getting upset if it changes.*
- *Rigid eating habits, sensory issues around food and ability to regulate.*
- *Having a very keen interest in certain subjects or activities.*
- *Easily overwhelmed, getting upset if you ask them to do something.*
- *Finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on their own.*
- *Taking things very literally – for example, they may not understand phrases like "break a leg".*
- *Finding it hard to say how they feel.*

If these symptoms resonate, take the quiz below to find out whether your child's symptoms resemble those of children diagnosed with autism. A word of warning here though as symptoms tend to vary with age and co-occurring conditions like ADHD (which would not be uncommon) can skew results. Please remember, no two autistic children will be the same and, as children get older, they may mask these symptoms. This quiz is only a starting point to open conversations and signpost you. However, a high score suggests it's appropriate to speak to your child's school and GP to explore further.

This self-test was adapted from The Childhood Autism Spectrum Test or CAST (formerly the "Childhood Asperger's Syndrome Test"), developed by ARC (the Autism Research Centre) at the University of Cambridge, for assessing the severity of autism spectrum symptoms in children. If you have concerns about possible ASD, discuss this with your child's school and GP. An accurate diagnosis can only be made through referral for a clinical assessment. This screener is for personal use and guidance only.

Your child is particularly observant and has an unusual memory for details.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child is interested in minute detail.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child can fixate on a particular issue and not let it go until resolved.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child is more likely to notice specific details than appreciate the 'bigger picture'

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child is more likely to notice a pattern in something than the thing itself (show them an item and rather than showing interest in the item itself, they are making a link to something else)

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child has repetitive behaviours or ‘stimming’ such as chewing, scratching, twirling hair, flapping hands, rubbing fingers, banging head, jiggling foot, mumbling to themselves.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child struggles to filter out ‘background’ sounds, smells, visual details, which can lead to feeling over-stimulated.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child is particularly sensitive to noises or smells

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child struggles to feel at ease in social situations

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child has difficulty understanding the rules for polite behaviour (eg taking turns / talking over others / interrupting)?

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child doesn't notice if other people around them are getting bored or annoyed - they carry on obliviously.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child struggles to understand or relate to humour.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child can keep a *two-way, balanced* conversation going naturally.

- 4. Never
- 3. Rarely
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Often
- 0. Very Often

Your child joins in playing games with other children easily?

- 4. Never
- 3. Rarely
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Often
- 0. Very Often

When talking, your child doesn't let others get a word in.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child tends to be direct in how they express themselves, oblivious to how this might make others feel.

- 4. Yes - very often
- 3. Yes - often
- 2. Sometimes - to some extent
- 1. No - not really
- 0. No - not at all

Your child can become so absorbed in an activity, they hardly notice what's going on around them.

- 4. Yes - very often
- 3. Yes - often
- 2. Sometimes - to some extent
- 1. No - not really
- 0. No - not at all

Is it important to your child to fit in with his or her peer group?

- 4. No - never
- 3. Rarely - not much
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Yes - often
- 0. Yes - very often

Your child does struggles to cope with a change to routines, plans or circumstances.

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Your child struggles with making and maintaining eye contact with others

- 4. Very Often
- 3. Often
- 2. Sometimes
- 1. Rarely
- 0. Never

Scoring:

The higher your score out of a possible 8-, the more likely it is that your child should be assessed for autism.

Next steps:

- Complete this quiz and take it to your child's school to help open a productive conversation. A word of warning here though as symptoms tend to vary with age and co-occurring conditions like ADHD can skew results. Nevertheless, this is a good starting point and your school and GP will support you in exploring formal diagnosis if this quiz indicates sufficient
- Read more about autism here:
<https://childmind.org/guide/parents-guide-to-autism/>
- Feel free to contact me directly on nurtureandthrive24@gmail.com to discuss your child's needs and options for assessment.