



What is Autism?



- Autism is a **medical condition** that affects the way a child learns and behaves.
- Autism is **not a disease**, and it is not something that other children can “catch.”
- **Another name for autism is “Autism Spectrum Disorder,” or “ASD.”**
- Autism is a **condition that a child is born with**. It is not caused by anything the parent did (or did not do).
- Children with autism are very different from one another. But they all have **difficulty interacting with other people, and communicating what they need or want**.
- Some parents describe their children with autism as “in their own world” or “difficult to reach.”
- There are treatments that can improve the learning and behaviors of children with autism. **Treatments work best when they are started at young ages**. This is called “early intervention.”
- **Families play an important role** in helping their child with autism. They can learn special ways to play with their child and teach him or her new skills and behaviors.
- Children with autism are still children. Even though they may act differently sometimes, they still **love to play and to be around people who love them!**



What does Autism Look Like?

Some early “red flags” of autism are:

- Not using words as much as other children their age
- Not using gestures (such as pointing with finger) to let you know what they want
- Not understanding the words that other people are saying (which may make it seem like they’re being stubborn, or not listening)
- Not trying to get other people to pay attention to them (for example, holding up toys or drawings to show them to other people)
- Preferring to play alone, and not paying attention to other people who are trying to interact with them
- Playing with toys in unusual ways, or using toys in the exact same way, over and over again (like spinning the wheels of toy cars, or lining up objects over and over again)
- Becoming very upset when they hear certain noises, or when certain materials touch their skin, or when there are changes to the everyday routines or activities they’re used to

But remember – No two children with autism are the same!

If you think that your child may have autism, be sure to talk to your doctor!