

What is National Autism Awareness Month?

National Autism Awareness Month is an excellent time to promote awareness and acceptance of autism. This health observance also can draw attention to the tens of thousands of people who are diagnosed with autism each year.

What is autism?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders can cause difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors. Signs of autism can show up in varying degrees. ASD can be associated with intellectual disability, difficulties in motor coordination (movement) and attention, and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal problems. However, some persons with ASD excel in visual skills, music, math, and art.

Sign and symptoms

The characteristic behaviors of ASD may appear in infancy, but they usually become clearer during early childhood. People with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. Many people with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person's life. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a complete [list](#) of symptoms for children and adults with ASD.

Mobile apps

- [Autism Awareness](#)
- [Birdhouse](#)
- [Choiceworks](#)
- [Touch Autism](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Jan Kovach, MD**, our Medical Director.

Early diagnosis and treatment helps young children with autism develop to their full potential. The primary goal of treatment is to improve the overall ability of the child to function. Diagnosing ASD can be difficult, since there is no medical test to diagnose the disorders. Doctors look at the child's behavior and development to make a diagnosis. ASD can sometimes be detected at 18 months or younger. By age 2, a diagnosis by an experienced professional can be considered very reliable. However, many children do not receive a final diagnosis until much older.

Each child or adult with autism is unique, so each autism intervention plan should be tailored to meet specific needs. There are no medications that can cure ASD or treat the core symptoms. However, some drugs can help some people with ASD function better. Research shows that early intervention treatment services can greatly improve a child's development.

It is important to distinguish autism from other conditions. An accurate and early autism diagnosis can provide the basis for an appropriate educational and treatment program. [Our website](#) is a good resource for information about recommended preventive screenings.

Additional resources

- [Autism Society of America](#)
- [Autism Speaks](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)