

What to do if your daughter or son appears to have autism.

What is Autism

- Autism affects more than 1 in every 1000 children.
- Symptoms of Autism are usually apparent within the first three years of life.
- Individuals with autism have a normal life span.
- Autism is a neurological condition, the cause(s) of which are not yet understood.
- Genetic factors may be involved in some cases.
- Although there is no cure, autism is a treatable condition.
- Early intervention is very important

What does it do?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disorder that is characterised by problems in three areas:

- social development
- communication
- behaviour

The specific symptoms may vary widely from one individual to another.

Social Development Signs

- Lacks awareness of others and their feelings.
- Uses intense eye contact or sees 'through' people.
- Chooses to do things alone.
- Has difficulty co-operating in group activities.
- Finds it hard to make friends with same age children.

Communication Signs

- Is delayed in developing speech and gestures for his/her age group.
- Often misunderstands or ignores language and gestures made by others.
- Uses an unusual speech pattern and tone.
- Repeats phrases constantly or echoes what others say.
- Butts in or talks over the top of others

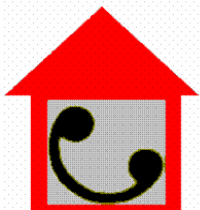
Behaviour Signs

- Wants rigid routines and gets upset if things change.
- Resists change by rearranging things back the way they were.
- Makes repetitive movements, such as finger flicking and hand flapping.
- May respond strangely to loud or intense noises, certain smells or touch sensations.
- Spends long periods of time arranging or rearranging objects.
- Is unable to play imaginative games.
- Has sudden, often unexplained, mood swings or temper tantrums.
- Displays excessive fear over certain objects or people.
- Is hard to toilet train.
- Doesn't sleep well or has abnormal sleeping patterns (night walking).
- Learns haphazardly.
- Can't reason about what he or she can't see.
- Has no awareness of danger.
- Knocks, hurts, or picks at body to point of injury.

Early diagnosis that leads to a treatment plan offers the best hope for autistic people to lead as near to normal a life as possible.

The Basic Principles of Caring for an Autistic Child are -

- Be consistent – every contact with the person should handle them in the same way and follow the same routines.
- Be firm, use clear rules – this helps reduce the confusion in their world.
- Use appropriate rewards – the reward must have greater meaning to the person than negative rewards already received.
- Intrude – don't allow self-injurious behaviour to continue, distract and calm.
- Plan for success – build on things that go right.
- Choose priorities – work on behaviours where greatest benefit will happen – start with safety, then to through communication, social behaviour, learning.
- Treat the 'why' as well as 'what' – find out what triggers inappropriate behaviour and avoid it.
- Use appropriate cues to assist understanding and learning – 'when we finish the breakfast dishes we go to school' – and maintain them consistently.



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If you suspect your child shows signs of Autism. don't rest until you have had a diagnosis from a respected professional with expertise in this area.

Where to go for help

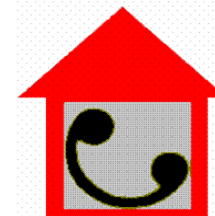
Rescare can give you the names of some of these clinicians. Phone us, fax us, or email us.

Or you can contact -

Autism New Zealand – National Office
P O Box 45052
Tower Junction
Addington
Christchurch 8149
Phone: 0800 Autism (288 476)
email: info@autismnz.org.nz
web: www.autismnz.org.nz

Autistic adults have often been wrongly diagnosed (or not diagnosed at all, just treated) as if they were bi-polar. The drugs used to treat their symptoms have actually hidden their real condition but are now so much part of their body's support system that weaning them off takes time.

email us at rescarenz.net.nz



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*Could my
intellectually
disabled
child be autistic*

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- * The cause(s) are not yet understood.
- * Although there is no cure, autism is a treatable condition.
- * Early intervention is very important.

HOW YOU CAN CONTACT US

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