

KNOW BEFORE YOU KNOCK



AUTISM

Every child and family has unique aspects of their situation, experience, and diagnosis. This page is intended to provide a general overview, but is not attempting to represent every situation or child you encounter. Every family deserves your expertise to assess and adapt your prior knowledge. This resource is best viewed electronically.

PREVALENCE

27.6 per 1,000 (1:36) (2)

NATIONAL/STATE ORGS

[Autism Society of Greater WI](#)

"Mission: We create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully."

DEFINITION

" (Autism) is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that typically appears during early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, communication, relationships, and self-regulation. The Autism experience is different for everyone. It is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is often referred to as a "spectrum condition" that affects people differently and to varying degrees." (1)

TOP RESOURCES

- [EI in WI Supporting Autism Learning Bundle](#)
- [Autism | Raising Children Network](#)
- [Neurodivergent Narwhals](#)
- [Sensory differences - a guide for all audiences](#)

DIFFERENCES

THAT MAY BE PRESENT

- Communicate in ways other than eye contact, gestures, and spoken word
- Gestalt language processing (3)
- Echolalia (4)
- Hyperlexia (5)
- Require more time alone to decompress from sensory and/or social demands (6)
- Experience sensory differences and may experience sensory overwhelm or over/under stimulation (7) (8)
- Have a regression in skills (9)
- Unique play (i.e. enjoys stacking or lining up toys) (10)
- Repetitive motions or stimming (11)
- Find routines calming (12)
- Have strong interests (13)
- Selective food preferences, may have ARFID, may experience digestion issues (14) (15) (16)
- Sleep dysregulation (17)
- Rarely copy parent gestures, facial expressions, vocalizations, or behaviors (i.e. combing hair) (18)
- Masking can lead to mental distress and meltdowns (19)
- Require more cognitive processing time possibly due to reduced synaptic pruning (20)

CONSIDERATIONS

THAT MAY IMPACT SERVICES

- Parent's readiness to consider diagnosis, previous experiences with autistic people.
- Parents may not be aware of the genetic component of autism (21)
- Parents may be pressured by the medical community to seek intense intervention. (22) (23)
- "The brains of autistic children tend to grow faster than average during early childhood, especially during the first 3 years of life... in autistic children, parts of the brain communicate with each other in an atypical way." (24)
- Girls and women are less likely to be diagnosed early (25) (26)

LANGUAGE TO USE/AVOID

DON'T SAY

SAY THIS INSTEAD

High/low functioning or mild/severe	High/low support needs
Red Flags	Signs of Autism
Nonverbal	Nonspeaking
Curing autism	Supporting autism

Follow each family's lead in how to refer to their child (for example, autistic child vs. child with autism) (27)

SUPPLEMENTARY TESTS

THAT COULD BE USED OR SEEN IN MEDICAL RECORDS

- Sensory Profile 2 (SP-2)
- Sensory Processing Measure, 2nd Edition (SPM-2)
- Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)
- Communication Matrix
- Modified Checklist for Autism (MCHAT) - to be used and interpreted with caution

REFERENCE LIST

February 2025