



Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that causes significant social and behavioral problems that begins early in childhood and lasts throughout a person's life. It affects how a person thinks, communicates, interacts, behaves and problem-solving skills. Diagnosis of ASD includes autistic disorder, generalized developmental disorder (PDD-NOS) and Asperger's syndrome.

Causes:

- The exact causes of Autism Spectrum Disorders are unknown
- Can be related to genetic conditions and the environment
- There is no research confirming the relationship between any vaccine and the development of ASD.

Signals:

- Little eye contact and prefer to be alone
- Delay in speech or language
- Great interest in moving objects or some parts of objects
- Getting upset about changes in their routine, being in new places or things that stimulate them too much
- Show obsessive interests such as: sequences or hand washing
- Interest in some topics such as: numbers, details or data
- Difficulty expressing their emotions and needs, and understanding the emotions of others
- Repetitive movements with their hands, rock their body or spin in circles
- Different reaction when smelling, tasting, observing, feeling or listening

Diagnosis:

Every child should have periodic checkups with a pediatrician from early stages. The diagnosis is made based on the child's development, observations of the doctor and parents and other studies. ASD can be detected between the ages of 18 to 24 months. In some cases, it will be necessary to start evaluating before 18 months. Early diagnosis is important to start with the treatment the child needs (Early Intervention).

During babyhood and childhood, the pediatrician will evaluate:

- Growth and learning
- Social development and behavior
- Parental collaboration, vital during this process
- Specific studies and consultations with other specialists

Treatment:

ASD treatment depends on the needs of each person and could include:

- Medicines
- Therapies (behavioral and psychological, speech and language, physical, sensory and occupational)
- Treatment of specialists (psychiatrists, neurologists, geneticists, gastroenterologists)

Recommendations for parents:

- Motivate your child, do not underestimate their ability to learn
- Learn about the condition, look for information and support
- Every child is different, do not compare their progress
- Provide your child with a positive and learning environment
- Comply with the treatment and follow-up of your child
- Take care of your emotional health, your child perceives how you feel
- Talk to the pediatrician, school staff and support groups
- Practice stress management techniques and don't forget to take care of yourself.



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Reference:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/spanish/autism/facts.html>

<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/autismspectrumdisorder.html>