

Is it Autism?

Information for Early Childhood Educators

Early Signs

Social Communication and Interaction

The child may:

- Use few or no words, repeat patterns of words or may have well developed speech, but only talk about a limited range of interests
- Not respond to their name or simple instructions
- Not copy others' actions
- Have very limited attention span, except for activities that include their interests, e.g., trains
- Not engage with peers
- Not engage in pretend play
- Make limited eye contact

This list does not constitute a diagnosis of Autism. Many young children may show some of these signs at different ages. However, if the child's development is affected, it may indicate the need to consult a paediatrician.

Restricted and Repetitive Behaviours and Sensory Processing Differences

The child may:

- Use repetitive speech
- Insist on routines staying the same
- Have a narrow range of interests
- Repeat an action over and over
- Get "stuck" on an activity so that it is difficult to move them on
- Line up or stack objects and may become upset if the order changes
- Be over or under sensitive to touch, sounds, sights, tastes, textures, movement, smells

A child may show many early signs or only a few

The signs of Autism may be evident by age 2 or may only become apparent when the child starts school

1 in 160 children is diagnosed with Autism

Share your concerns with the family

This may lead to the child receiving specialised support that improves their future outcomes.

Tips

Set aside time to meet: make sure the message is clear and the carer knows it is important.

Be specific: Talk about the specific skills that you are concerned about.

Recommend seeking professional advice:

the GP may refer to a paediatrician. Contact the Autism Association of Western Australia for more information to provide the family.

Encourage the family to seek support:

whatever the outcome of the assessment, the family may need additional support.

Diagnosing Autism

The family GP may refer to a paediatrician who may review and refer to the Disability Services Commission or Child Development Service for an assessment. Families can choose to have a private assessment, which may be quicker. In WA, a diagnosis must be agreed upon by a paediatrician, psychologist and speech pathologist.

What to do in the meantime

Refer to the accompanying booklet **Is It Autism?** for tips and strategies for the classroom.

For more information

The Raising Children Network – Autism page

For families concerned about their child's development in relation to ASD

www.raisingchildren.net.au/autism

Autism Association of Western Australia

Information for families and professionals on accessing a diagnosis, therapy and other supports. Phone (08) 9489 8900
Regional Callers 1800 636 427

www.autism.org.au

Autism affects more boys: 4 boys to 1 girl

Early diagnosis and intervention is the key to improving outcomes



Autism

Association of **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**