

## What is Autism

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that blocks the learning, language communication, emotional and social development of a child. It is a disorder with a wide range of symptoms sometimes so mild that a child can function in a regular classroom with special services and at other times so severe that a child is mute and institutionalised. Autism is a severely incapacitating life-long disability which typically manifests itself during the first 30 months of life.

Autism varies from child to child and time to time in severity and manner. Other common symptoms include sleeping, feeding and toileting problems, self-injurious behaviour, repetitive and self-stimulatory behaviour.

However, people with autism may have a wide range of intellectual ability. Often, they can show extraordinary abilities in mathematical or mechanical skills, or in music, rote, memory, etc.

Statistics show that one in every 150 children born today has a typical autism. The number of children with autism has increased by a staggering 30% over the last three years.

**Characteristics of Autism** A person with autism usually would have a pattern of characteristics and not necessarily one single symptom. Some of the characteristics of autism are:



- Stand-offish manner
- Inappropriate laughing
- Echolalic
- No fear of real dangers
- Apparent insensitivity to pain
- Difficulty mixing with other children
- Adverse to cuddling
- Sustained odd play
- Crying tantrums – extreme
- Distress for no discernible reason
- Indicates needs by gesture
- Acts deaf
- Unusual eye contact
- Resists normal teaching methods
- Spins objects
- Inappropriate attachment to objects
- Uneven gross/fine motor skills
- Resists change in routine
- Marked physical over activity or extreme passivity

## Who is affected by Autism

Autism occurs regardless of ethnicity, society, social economic status, educational background and lifestyle.

Autism is 4 times more common in males than in females.

It is not a problem associated with "poor-parenting".

The disorder is genetically linked.

The actual cause(s) of autism is not yet known. **IT CAN HAPPEN IN ANY FAMILY**

## What can we do?

### *Can people with Autism be helped?*

Education has proven to be the most helpful treatment for people with autism. A child with autism can benefit, often dramatically, from prompt recognition of his/her handicap and special education suited to his/her needs. Autism is a life-long disability and services must be planned also to help adolescents and adults cope with life and achieve their full potential.

Intensive Early Intervention in optimal educational settings results in improved outcomes in most young children with autism, including speech in 75% or more and significant improvements in rates of developmental progress and intellectual performance.

## Why should we be concerned?

Autism is a life-long condition. It affects every aspect of the person's life. A cure has yet to be found.

One in every 150 children born today has typical autism.

One in every 100 children has a disorder within the autistic spectrum. (NAS-UK 2008)

In the United States, the demand for such services rose by 556 percent during the 1990's.

(Newsweek - July 2000)

Compared with other disabilities, it is estimated that the net growth in the number of persons with autism is about 3 percent greater each year. (Department of Developmental Services, State of California, March 01, 1999)

*In Malaysia, persons with autism are referred to NASOM by Government hospitals and private practitioners. We have experience a 30% increase in our intake for the past 3 years. Yet our waiting list gets longer every day. To know more about us, please visit our website: [www.nasom.org.my](http://www.nasom.org.my)*

**The National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM)** is a non profit, non-governmental welfare organisation that provides education, help, care and protection for people with autism and their family members. Please contact us as follows:

### **School Matters**

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### **Assessment & Diagnosis**

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