

What is autism spectrum disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder with unknown cause. According to Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect), Australian estimates (2013) are currently 1 in 100 children with a diagnosis of ASD. More sensitive diagnostic criteria and increased awareness of the early indicators are thought to contribute to the increase in prevalence of ASD.

ASD is characterised and diagnosed by differences in two main areas: social communication and interaction and patterns of behaviour.

Children with ASD might have difficulty talking and socialising with others and using or understanding non-verbal communication (eg eye contact, facial expression and gestures) to share experiences. They also may need support to see things from other people's perspective or to understand and predict other people's behaviour.

Children with ASD may have behaviours that are characterised by repetitive speech, repetitive movements, repetitive use of toys/ objects, preference for routines, difficulty with flexibility within these routines, restricted interest in a narrow area or sensitivity to the environment (under sensitivity or over sensitivity).

Because of these differences, children with ASD may:

- ❖ Tend to play alone
- ❖ Have unusual interests or attachments
- ❖ Play with toys/ objects in unusual ways (eg repetitive lining up or spinning)
- ❖ Have difficulty coping with change
- ❖ Have unusual behaviours/ movements (eg rocking, flapping hands)
- ❖ Present with unusual distress or response to everyday sights, sounds, movements

(Autism Spectrum Australia)



The most important influence on a child's early development is daily interaction and activities within the family environment. Individualised early intervention programs can also support children and families to access opportunities and to achieve their potential.

For further information:

<http://www.directory.byronearlyintervention.org.au/>

<http://www.autismspectrum.org.au/>

http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/special_needs/special_needs.html



Shaping Outcomes

early childhood intervention service

> because we can