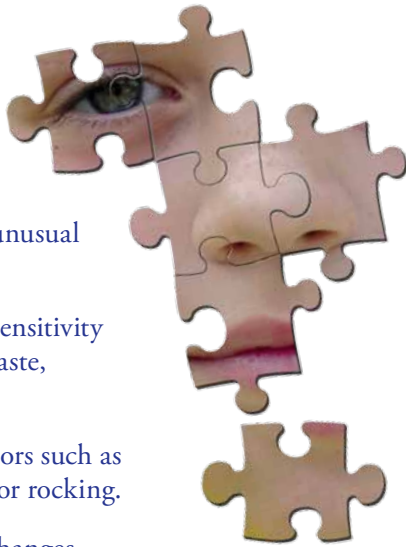


# Characteristics

Although there are some common characteristics, no two persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder experience the world or behave in the same way.

Some or all of the following characteristics may occur:

- Difficulty in using and understanding language.
- Poorly developed social skills and unusual play with toys.
- Over- or under- sensitivity to sound, sight, taste, touch, or smell.
- Repetitive behaviors such as spinning objects or rocking.
- Difficulty with changes to surroundings or routines.
- Certain behaviors exhibited to stimulate the senses, such as switching a light on and off repeatedly, or humming loudly.
- Uneven skill development. Some skills are normal or superior for their age while others show significant delay.
- Challenging behaviors such as aggression, self-injury or severe withdrawal.



## Florida's First Choice for Autism Support

The Center for Autism & Related Disabilities (CARD) provides support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and related disabilities.



cardusf



cardusf



**Center for Autism & Related Disabilities**  
College of Behavioral & Community Sciences  
University of South Florida  
13301 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MHC 2113A  
Tampa, FL 33612

In Florida: 1-800-333-4530 or 813-974-2532  
<http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu>

*A Program of*



# What is AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

# What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological disorder which affects the way the brain develops and processes information. It can impact a person's ability to communicate, understand language, play, and socially interact with others. The first signs usually appear as developmental delays before age three. The term Autism Spectrum Disorder incorporates several previously related diagnoses including PDD-NOS (pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified), Asperger's Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder and Rett's Disorder.



## Causes

Nobody knows what causes Autism Spectrum Disorder. Some scientists believe there is a biological cause that affects the working of the brain, but this has not been proven. It is possible there are many factors that could interact with one another which could cause different characteristics in each individual with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Researchers are working hard to find the cause(s) of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Parents do not cause Autism Spectrum Disorder. No factors in a child's experiences or in parenting styles are responsible for Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## Facts

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Autism Spectrum Disorder occurs four times more often in boys than girls. Families of all racial, ethnic and social backgrounds anywhere in the world are affected.

ASD occurs by itself, with intellectual disability, mental health issues or with other health problems, such as epilepsy, viral infections, or changes in a person's growth rate metabolism.

## Treatment

Treatment and educational needs for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and related disabilities should include:

- 1) Early and accurate diagnosis increases the child's opportunity for positive development and success.
- 2) Professional services for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder may include applied behavior analysis (ABA), or speech and occupational therapy, and require a cooperative effort between professionals and families.
- 3) Generally, persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder seem to make the best progress when they are in as typical a setting as possible and provided with individualized support and therapy to meet their needs.
- 4) By implementing best practices in all areas of life, progress in persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder can be optimized.

## Summary

Autism Spectrum Disorder can be a complex disorder. But, it is not hopeless. With the help of comprehensive interventions and support services, individuals with ASD can make excellent progress and achieve a higher quality of life.

