

April is National Autism Awareness Month

Introduction

Autism is a complex, developmental disability that normally appears in early childhood and can impact a person's social skills, ability to communicate, and more. The following guide has been prepared to provide information on the prevalence of autism, symptoms, and how caregivers can find support.

Prevalence

Autism is the fastest-growing developmental disability. According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 1 in 54 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ASD is over 4 times more common among boys than among girls.

Symptoms & Diagnosis

The disorder's symptoms vary widely. They may appear in infancy, but usually become clearer during early childhood. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has developed a detailed list of behaviors, listed in four main categories:

- Communication
- Social behavior
- Stereotyped behavior
- Other behavior

During developmental screening and observation, a child's doctor can use this list to determine areas of concern. When symptoms are evident, a team of specialists will work with the patient to confirm a diagnosis and develop a treatment plan. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each patient has very unique abilities and challenges. Therefore, the treatment plan will need to be tailored to address the patient's specific needs.

Finding Support

Each family has distinct needs and deals with stressful situations differently. Here are some tips for coping and finding support:

- **Ask for help** – do not hesitate to use the support available to you from the people around you.
- **Join a support group** – listening to others with similar experiences can provide comfort and encouragement.
- **Take a break** – even if it is only a few minutes, allow yourself to take some time away.
- **Keep a journal** – some parents have found a journal to be a helpful tool for keeping track of their child's progress, what is working and what is not.

Did you know?

1 in 54 children are diagnosed with autism, up from 1 in 125 just ten years ago.

Learn More

Learn more about autism disorder and how to get involved in raising awareness [here](#).

References:

<https://www.autism-society.org/get-involved/national-autism-awareness-month/>

<https://www.autismawarenessmonth.org/>

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

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit-excerpt/caring-caregiver>