Autism

The Learning Disability Team

Where we all make a difference
What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. (National Autistic Society (NAS), 2016)
Asperger Syndrome is a form of Autism.

People with Asperger Syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence.

They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.
When professionals discuss Autism they may use the abbreviations ASC or ASD. Autism is a spectrum condition. While all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways.

Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying Learning Disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support (National Autistic Society (NAS), 2016).

All autistic people share certain difficulties, but being autistic will affect them in different ways. All people on the autism spectrum learn and develop. With the right sort of support, all can be helped to live a more fulfilling life of their own choosing.

Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. If you are autistic, you are autistic for life; autism is not an illness or disease and cannot be 'cured'. Often people feel being autistic is a fundamental aspect of their identity. (National Autistic Society (NAS), 2016)
Common Terms
What causes Autism?

The exact cause of autism is still being investigated. Research into causes suggests that a combination of factors - genetic and environmental - may account for differences in development.

Autism is not caused by a person's upbringing, their social circumstances and is not the fault of the individual with the condition.

(NAS, 2016)
Commonality

There are around 700,000 people in the UK living with autism - that's more than 1 in 100. People from all nationalities and cultural, religious and social backgrounds can be autistic, although it appears to affect more men than women. (Gould & Smith, 2011)

Autistic people often do not 'look' disabled. Some parents of autistic children say that other people simply think their child is naughty, while adults find that they are misunderstood.

Some autistic people say the world feels overwhelming and this can cause them considerable anxiety. In particular, understanding and relating to other people, and taking part in everyday family, school, work and social life, can be harder.

Other people appear to know, intuitively, how to communicate and interact with each other, yet can also struggle to build rapport with autistic people. Autistic people may wonder why they are 'different' and feel their social differences mean people don't understand them.
• Effects social communication, social interaction and social imagination. The ‘Triad of Impairment’.
• Need for Routines and dislike of change
• Sensory sensitivity
• Special interests
• Rigidity
• Specific language difficulties

(National Autistic Society (NAS), 2016)
‘Social Interaction’

Autistic people often have difficulty expressing their own emotions. This can make it very hard for them to navigate the social world.

A person may:
• Be blunt
• Be direct in conversation
• Give no eye contact
• Exhibit odd behaviours
• Appear to be insensitive
• seek out time alone when overloaded by other people
• not seek comfort from other people
• appear to behave 'strangely' or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate.

**Autistic people may find it hard to form friendships.**

Some may want to interact with other people and make friends, but may be unsure how to go about it.
‘Social Communication’

Autistic people may have difficulties with interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like gestures or tone of voice. Many have a very literal understanding of language.

They may find it difficult to use or understand:
- facial expressions
- tone of voice
- jokes
- sarcasm.

It often helps to speak in a clear, consistent way and to give autistic people time to process what has been said to them.

Write in clear, direct sentences. Not overly descriptive.
‘Social Imagination’ allows us to understand and predict other people’s behaviour, make sense of abstract ideas, and imagine situations, which are out of our sight.

People with autism might experience difficulty in any of the following:

- Imagining the world from someone else’s perspective
- Difficulty in understanding and interpreting another person’s feelings, ideas, and beliefs, which might differ from their own.
- Predicting the future or what may happen next.
- Coping in new or unfamiliar situations
Communication Interpretation

Interpretate hand gestures
The Maglev Train in Shanghai is the fastest train in the world
Interpretate facial expressions

Hi, how are you?

Interpretate body language

I don't know what to say next
Do I know the appropriate script to respond with

I don't understand what you are saying
What are they trying to tell me?

I need more time to process this information
Their voice is too loud, it really hurts my ears

I don't know that script, but I have to respond
I like trains, I am comfortable talking about trains

Keep body calm, use appropriate gestures
What are the appropriate physical gestures?

I feel uncomfortable when people look at me
I'm nervous the little noises I make help me feel calm

Are they going to touch me? I don't like to be touched
That freckle on their nose looks like a train

I am not comfortable moving my body like that

Am I giving too much information or not enough?
Is this a good or bad thing? Are they happy?

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Repetitive Behaviour and Routines

The world can often seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to autistic people. They often prefer to have a daily routine so that they know what is going to happen every day. They may want to always travel the same way to and from school or work, or eat exactly the same food for breakfast. Bering in hospital can alter their normal routine and affect behaviours (NAS, 2016).

Making ‘Reasonable Adjustments’ in RLBUHT will assist people with autism and their family/carers prepare for their time in hospital.
Sensory Sensitivity

Autistic people may also experience over or under-sensitivity to:

- sounds
- touch
- tastes
- smells
- light
- colours
- temperatures
- pain.

For example, they may find certain background sounds, which other people ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting. This can cause anxiety or even physical pain. Or they may be fascinated by lights or spinning objects.

The Learning Disability Team in RLBUHT has sensory items to utilise for patients who may benefit them. Please contact a member of the team for more information.
Autistic Spectrum Disorder

- ADD
- Depression
- Auditory Processing
- Sensory Integration Disorder
- Gifted
- Developmental Coordination Disorder
- OCD
- Tourette's
- Anxiety
- ADHD
- Specific Learning Difficulties
Autism Related Strategies

‘Fulfilling and rewarding lives’
The strategy for adults with autism in England (2010)

Statutory guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy

Giving adults with autism and their families the best care and support
Some rules for the NHS and local councils

Please click on the pictures to access full documents

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Further Reading


Thank you.

For more details please contact:
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