

What Else Do I Need to Know?

How can I tell if a child's development is on track?

You can follow a child's development by looking for developmental milestones—that is, how he or she plays, learns, speaks, moves, and acts. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children be screened for general development using standardized, validated tools at 9, 18, and 24 or 30 months, and for ASD at 18 and 24 months or whenever a parent or provider has a concern. Parents should talk with their child's doctor at every visit about the milestones their child has reached and what to expect next. Learn more about developmental milestones and get free milestone checklists at CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." website, www.cdc.gov/Milestones.

As a professional who works with children, what should I do if I think a child might have ASD?

You are a valuable resource to parents! They look to you for information on their child, and they trust you. Visit CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." website, www.cdc.gov/ActEarly for tools and resources to help you educate parents on the full range of child development. For tips on sharing concerns about a child's development, visit http://www.firstsigns.org/concerns/parent_parent.htm.

Can schools help and what is IDEA?

This ADDM Network report highlights the important role public school systems play in providing evaluating and serving children with ASD. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that ensures that all children with disabilities, from birth through 21 years of age, can get free, appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living. IDEA also provides for evaluation of children who might have or be at risk for developmental disabilities. For more information about IDEA, please visit <http://idea.ed.gov/>. To find the contact information for a free evaluation in your state, please visit www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/parents/states.html

What kinds of treatments or educational interventions can help people with ASD?

There are many different types of treatments available for people with ASD, and there is no single best treatment. Each person with ASD has unique strengths. Promoting these strengths while supporting new skills is critical.

Early intervention is important, but intervention at any age can be life-changing.

For guidance on choosing a treatment program, visit the Treatment Options section of the National Institute of Mental Health's autism website at www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-pervasive-developmental-disorders/index.shtml. You can also access a report on evidenced-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with ASD at <http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/ebp-update>.

Can medication help children with ASD?

There are no medications that can cure ASD or treat the core symptoms; however, there are medications that can help some people with ASD function better. To learn more about medications and ASD, visit the Food and Drug Administration's website at www.fda.gov.

What do we know about adolescents and adults living with ASD?

The number, characteristics, and needs of adolescents and adults living with ASD in the United States have not been well studied. By parent report, almost 2% of adolescents have ASD (38). They may face unique challenges during adolescence and as they transition to adulthood. Adolescents with ASD seem to be at increased risk for certain health conditions. For example, adolescents with ASD are more likely to be obese than adolescents without developmental disabilities (39). Adolescents also encounter significant issues with accessing appropriate services and gaining employment (40-41). Over time, the number of young adults with ASD seeking vocational rehabilitation services has increased, but the percent of adults with ASD who are employed, the number of hours they work, and the wages they earn have not improved.

For information on interventions for adolescents and young adults with ASD, read the Agency for Healthcare Quality Research's review: http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/ehc/products/271/1197/CER65_Autism-Adolescents_executivesummary_20120724.pdf.

For resources related to the transition from adolescence to adulthood, you can download the Autism Speaks' Transition Tool-Kit: www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/transition-tool-kit