

AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) OR AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION (ASC)

Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Autism Spectrum Condition (ASD/ASC) is a developmental disorder or neurodiversity seen in children who may present with two main areas of challenge in:

- Social communication and social interaction
- Repetitive, restrictive and ritualistic behaviours

What is Autistic Spectrum Disorder?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a recognised clinical diagnosis describing a range of difficulties with social interactions, social communication and social imagination. ASD is a developmental disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others. Individuals with ASD have difficulties with social interaction, social communication and social imagination.



Children with ASD/ASC may be perceived as having difficulties socialising with their peer group, perhaps being more content in playing alone, and may struggle to understand others' body language, jokes or sarcasm which may create a barrier to communication and making friends. Children with ASD/ASC may struggle to play pretend games due to preferring nonfiction or more factual scenarios. They may feel very comfortable following routines, and dislike any changes or diversion from that routine, and they may engage in repetitive or ritualistic activities.

Children with ASD/ASC can have amazing strengths and wonderful personalities, and can fulfil their potential with the right understanding and support from the people around them.

What are the symptoms of ASD/ASC?

These can be divided into three areas:

People with ASD have difficulty with social communication and interaction, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviours. The list below gives some examples of common types of behaviours in people diagnosed with ASD. Not all people with ASD will have all behaviours, but most will have several of the behaviours listed below.

Social communication / interaction behaviours may include:

- Making little or inconsistent eye contact
- Appearing not to look at or listen to people who are talking
- Infrequently sharing interest, emotion, or enjoyment of objects or activities (including by infrequently pointing at or showing things to others)
- Not responding or being slow to respond to one's name or to other verbal bids for attention
- Having difficulties with the back and forth of conversation
- Often talking at length about a favourite subject without noticing that others are not interested or without giving others a chance to respond
- Displaying facial expressions, movements, and gestures that do not match what is being said
- Having an unusual tone of voice that may sound sing-song or flat and robot-like
- Having trouble understanding another person's point of view or being unable to predict or understand other people's actions
- Difficulties adjusting behaviours to social situations
- Difficulties sharing in imaginative play or in making friends

Restrictive / repetitive behaviours may include:

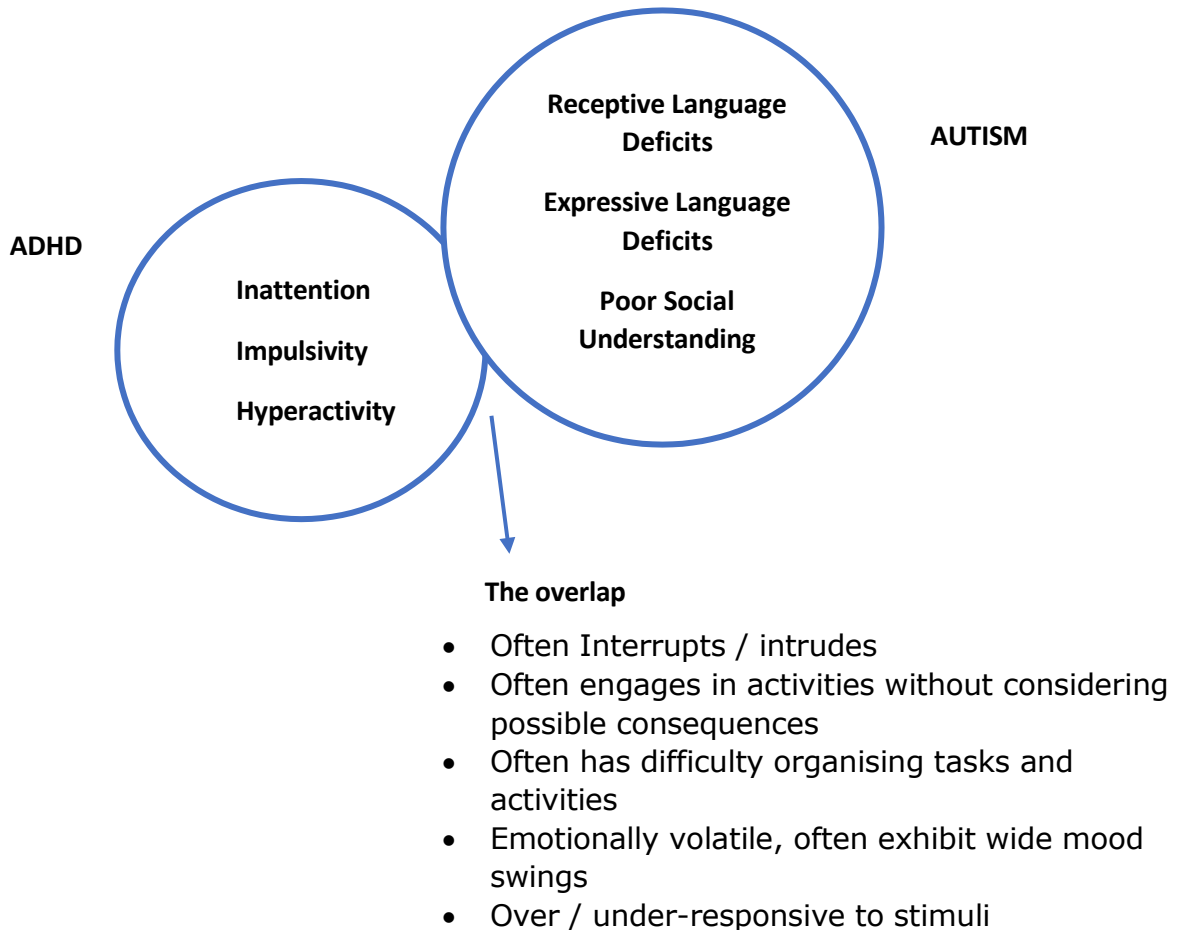
- Repeating certain behaviours or having unusual behaviours, such as repeating words or phrases (a behaviour called echolalia)
- Having a lasting intense interest in specific topics, such as numbers, details, or facts
- Showing overly focused interests, such as with moving objects or parts of objects
- Becoming upset by slight changes in a routine and having difficulty with transitions
- Being more sensitive or less sensitive than other people to sensory input, such as light, sound, clothing, or temperature

People with ASD may also experience sleep problems and irritability.

People on the autism spectrum also may have many strengths, including:

- Being able to learn things in detail and remember information for long periods of time

- Being strong visual and auditory learners
- Excelling in math, science, music, or art
- Many individuals with ASD also suffer some form of sensory sensitivity, such as not liking the smell of something or the feel of labels in their clothes. They may also have a special interest that they can hyper-focus on.



What are the causes of ASD and risk factors?

Researchers don't know the primary causes of ASD, but studies suggest that a person's genes can act together with aspects of their environment to affect development in ways that lead to ASD. Some factors that are associated with an increased likelihood of developing ASD include:

- Having a sibling with ASD
- Having older parents

What is the treatment for ASD?

Unfortunately, there is no typical or prescribed medication that is able to relieve the symptoms of ASD. However, there behavioural, psychological and educational interventions are other alternative treatments available including:

- Parent training
- Skill-building interventions
- Learn social, communication, Speech and language skills
- Reduce behaviours that interfere with daily functioning

- Increase or build upon strengths
- Learn life skills necessary for living independently