

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disability that is characterised by a different way of processing the world, traits are which are shared below. Each autistic person has a unique combination of traits. Early identification is helpful in supporting their successful pathway forward and helping each person live their best life.



SOCIAL COMMUNICATION



Different verbal development

- May communicate through echolalia
- Louder or softer tone of voice than expected
- May not meet typical speech milestones
- Loves to speak about special interests
- May be literal in language use



Different non-verbal communication

- May find it hard to interpret body language and tone
- May use social gestures in isolation
- Facial expressions on outside may not be reflective of internal emotions
- Preference for looking away when communicating



Different social relationships

- May be happy in their own world or with one other friend
- May find comfort in parallel play beyond typical norms
- May find difficulty joining in large groups
- May find relationships with autistic people easier

INTERESTS AND PROCESSING



Strong interests

- May have very strong interests
- May find high distress when transitioning away from items of interest



Prefers structure and routine

- Does best when knowing what is happening and all the details
- May prefer to do things in the same way
- May find sudden changes and transitions distressing



Repetitive behaviour

- May enjoy lining things up
- May enjoy scripting from TV shows or music
- May use repetitive movements to express feelings (e.g. flap hands, spin, rock)



Sensory processing differences

- May have atypical responses to sensory stimuli like finding certain fabrics intolerable, sudden loud noises distressing or seek out certain sensations to regulate

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS AUTISTIC



Gather information

Keep observing your child to see how they fit into the above categories. Write them down to take into your assessment.



Seek out autistic voices

Look up the hashtag #ActuallyAutistic on social media, or go to our website for a list of resources for further reading.



Contact your GP

Your local GP will be able to support you with the information gathered to organise a referral for assessment.