



Autism Awareness

Created by: Akancha Tripathi - 26/07/2024

Table of contents

1. [What is Autism?](#)
2. [What are the causes of Autism?](#)
3. [What are the symptoms of Autism?](#)
4. [How can Autism be diagnosed and treated?](#)
5. [Summary](#)

What is Autism?

Autism or autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a broad range of complex neurobehavioral conditions that begin in early childhood and may last throughout a person's life. The disorder may result in impaired social interaction, delayed language development, and insufficient non-verbal communication skills combined with rigid, repetitive behavior. It is a serious developmental disorder that immensely affects the ability to communicate and interact.

Children with autism have trouble comprehending the thoughts and emotions of others, making it very difficult for them to express themselves with words, gestures, facial expressions, or touch. They are very sensitive and may be greatly troubled -- sometimes even pained -- by sounds, touches, smells, or sights that seem normal to others. Autism is a spectrum disorder (because it has a wide range of symptoms), so each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. They may have unusually developed skills in areas such as drawing, creating music, solving math problems, or memorizing facts.

ASD is being diagnosed in individuals around the world, regardless of race, culture, or economic background. As per research, autism occurs more often in boys than in girls, with a 4 to 1 male-to-female ratio.

What are the causes of Autism?

Autism arises from abnormalities in parts of the brain that interpret sensory input and process language. Neuron disbalance at birth leads to ASD. A high-risk pregnancy or a complicated delivery may be also considered a factor. Environmental conditions, however, cannot be blamed, as patients are born with the disorder.

The common causes are:

- Genetic mutations
- Advanced age of mother or father at conception
- Exposure to drugs or chemicals during pregnancy (e.g. use of alcohol, antiseizure drugs)
- Maternal health conditions such as diabetes and obesity
- Untreated phenylketonuria (called PKU, an inborn metabolic disorder caused by the absence of enzyme phenylalanine hydroxylase.)
- Rubella (German measles)
- Gastrointestinal (GI) disorders
- Seizures
- Sleep disorders
- Mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression
- Attention issues
- Having an immediate family member with autism
- Low birth weight
- Metabolic imbalances
- Exposure to heavy metals and environmental toxins
- A history of viral infections
- Foetal exposure to medications

What are the symptoms of Autism?

Autism symptoms typically become evident during early childhood, between 12 to 36 months of age, persist, and interfere with daily living. Early symptoms may include a marked delay in language or impaired social development.

Core symptoms of Autism are divided into two categories:

i. Social interaction and communication challenges

1. Issues with communication

- Spoken language (around a third of people with autism are nonverbal)
- Gestures
- Tone of voice

2. Difficulties sharing emotions

- Recognizing one's own emotions
- Expressing emotions
- Seeking emotional comfort from others
- Feeling overwhelmed in social situations
- Gauging personal space (appropriate distance between people)

3. Maintaining a back-and-forth conversation

4. Issues with nonverbal communication

- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Reading body language

5. Difficulties developing and maintaining relationships
6. Problems in paying attention or concentrating

ii. Restricted or repetitive behaviors

1. Repetitive body movements
 - Rocking
 - Flapping
 - Spinning
2. Running back and forth
3. Repetitive motions with objects
 - Spinning wheels
 - Shaking sticks
 - Flipping levers
4. Repetitive speech pattern
5. Adherence to specific routines or behaviors
 - Same daily schedule
 - Similar meal menu
 - A preferred set of clothes
 - Set route to school
6. Fixated interests or preoccupations like staring at lights or spinning objects
7. Increase or decrease in sensitivity to specific sensory information from their surroundings such as sound, light, smell or touch
8. Narrow or extreme interests in specific topics
9. Ritualistic behaviors
 - Lining up objects
 - Repeatedly touching objects in a set order

How can Autism be diagnosed and treated?

ASD diagnosis involves several different screenings, observations, genetic tests, and evaluations.

1. **Developmental screenings** : All children must undergo screening for ASD at the ages of 18 and 24 months, it can help with early diagnosis of ASD and timely intervention of doctors.
2. **Tests** - Pediatricians may recommend a combination of tests for autism, including:
 - DNA testing for genetic diseases
 - Behavioral evaluation
 - Visual and audio tests
 - Occupational therapy screening
 - Developmental questionnaires

Diagnosis is typically made by a team of specialists which may include child psychologists or psychiatrists, pediatric neurologists, developmental pediatricians, occupational therapists, or speech and language pathologists.

Doctors recommend appropriate therapies and interventions (involving behavioral treatment, medicines, or both) to help minimize symptoms and maximize abilities. A treatment plan tailored to address the person's specific needs may consist of one or more of the following therapies:

- Speech therapy
- Social skills therapy
- Physical & play therapy
- Behavioural & developmental therapy
- Music & Biomedical therapy

Research shows that early diagnosis and interventions are more likely to have major positive effects. In case of any signs or symptoms of ASD, it is important to contact your pediatrician/doctor to make sure that therapy, medicine, or a required plan of treatment, is provided timely and effectively to your child./p

Summary

Autism or Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological disbalance present from birth or in early childhood and affects human behavior such as social interaction, communication of ideas and feelings, imagination, and establishment of relationships with others. ASD results from the operation of various factors in the developing brain. Regular screening can increase the chances of early diagnosis. The autism spectrum occurs along with mental health issues, skill deficiency, and language disorder in many cases. Treatment planning must address both, the needs typically associated with autistic disorders and needs associated with accompanying disabilities.

source:

<https://data.vikaspedia.in/short/lc?k=dJgExvH1vpA1ciiXNCIjHA>

