

Autism

Definition

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder that is characterized by impaired social interaction and communication, and restricted and repetitive behavior.

Causes

Scientists are not certain what causes autism, but it's likely that both genetics and environment play a role.

Signs

A child with autism often remains aloof, and prefer to play alone, tend not to share in the interests his peers have. It's hard for him to talk with other people and express himself using words or gestures.

Some autistic children may not talk at all, others have poor and repetitive oral expression. Difficulty in understanding language is generally observed.

Behavior is variable from one child to another. Some present stereotyped behaviors like body rocking and hand flapping, extreme underactivity or overactivity is noticed as well.

Autistic Teens are at an increased risk for showing problems related to anxiety such as becoming aggressive or developing self-injurious behavior,

Autistic persons deploy atypical cognitive processes, they can perform repetitive tasks as much as showing enhanced perceptual functioning particularly regarding visual memory.

75% of autistic individuals have mild to severe mental retardation, the other 25% have an average or above average intelligence

Diagnosis

The diagnosis is made by a child psychiatrist based on a **multi-disciplinary** team evaluation of various developmental milestones of the child, related to: cognition, affection, communication, social behavior and motor skills.

Screening tools such as developmental scales help to score autism that ranges from mild to severe

Treatment

A special education coupled with effective **multi-disciplinary** intervention of speech therapy, psychomotricity, and psychology help improve learning abilities.

A medical psychiatric and neurological care help to handle or to treat severe behavioral problems or other neurological disorders like seizures

Prognosis

Symptoms in many children with autism improve with intervention or as the children mature.

Performances are influenced by the intensity of the disorder and the IQ range of the child.

Some young autistic (Asperger) may complete high school and find suitable jobs, while others, who have mental retardation, may go on to learn basic academic skills, they would need supported employment and sheltered accommodation.