

Autism: Frequently Asked Questions



1. What is Autism?

Autism (Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD) is a difference in the way a person's brain works.

It affects how someone:

- learns
- communicates
- socializes
- handles changes
- experiences the world

Some children:

- love being social, others prefer quiet time
- speak with words, others use gestures, pictures, or devices
- enjoy routines and repetition
- have strong interests
- are extra sensitive (or less sensitive) to sounds, lights, or touch
- move in ways that help them feel calm (rocking, spinning, hand flapping, tiptoes)

Different does not mean less.

Every person with autism is first and always a person.

There is not one way to be autistic, just like there is not one way to be human.

2. What causes autism?

Autism is caused by a **combination of genetics and environmental factors** that affect how the brain develops.

Researchers know:

- It often runs in families
- Many genes affect how brain cells connect and communicate
- Things like prematurity or older parents may increase risk

Very important:

- ❌ Parents do NOT cause autism
- ❌ Autism is NOT a punishment or curse
- ❌ Vaccines do NOT cause autism

Dozens of studies show **no link between vaccines and autism**.

Autism is often noticed around 18–24 months which is around the same time some vaccines happen, but timing does NOT mean cause.

3. Why are more children being diagnosed now?

Autism isn't necessarily "new", we're just **better at recognizing it**.

Today:

- The definition is broader
- Professionals understand autism better
- Girls and underserved groups are being identified more often
- Children with other diagnoses are also being screened
- More premature babies survive
- Parents and teachers know what signs to look for

Many kids who used to be labeled "different" now receive helpful support.

4. Can autism be cured?

Autism is **not a disease**, so it doesn't need a cure. It is a **lifelong brain difference**.

But here's the hopeful part: Children with autism absolutely CAN learn, grow, and make progress.

There is no "one treatment."

Support is individualized and may include:

- speech therapy
- occupational therapy
- behavior supports
- visual supports
- communication tools
- parent coaching

The goal isn't to "fix" your child, it's to **support their strengths and help them thrive.**

5. What are common signs of autism?

Every child is different, but signs often fall into these areas:

Social & Communication

- Limited back-and-forth conversation
- Difficulty reading body language
- Trouble making friends
- Avoiding eye contact
- Delayed speech or unusual tone
- Not responding to name or directions

Repetitive Behaviors & Interests

- Hand flapping, rocking, spinning
- Lining up toys
- Very focused interests
- Prefers routines, struggles with change

Sensory Differences

- Sensitive to sounds, lights, smells, textures
- Or doesn't notice sensations as much

Development & Movement

- Language delays
- Movement delays
- Anxiety or strong reactions
- Very high or very low fear responses

If you notice several of these signs, talk with your pediatrician or a specialist.

One last encouragement 🧡

Autism is only **one part** of who your child is.

Your child is:

- funny
- creative
- loving
- capable
- unique

With support, patience, and understanding, they can grow in amazing ways.

