

■ **Unusual interests and behaviours that your child may have**

- Has to follow certain rituals or develop routines that might seem unusual or unnecessary.
- Gets easily upset by minor changes (e.g. Often thrive on routine).
- Has obsessive interests like maps, transportation system and routes.
- Shows great interest in parts of an object (e.g. Wheels of buses).
- Will line up toys when playing.
- Spin in circles, rock their body, or, flap their hands.
- Sensitive to sound, smell, taste or feeling of textures.

■ **Strategies to help rigidity / flexibility of thought**

- Work with school, peers and family members to ensure consistency.
- Use pictures / text and symbols as prompts.
- Structure the day by using timetables and checklists.
- Plan for change using visual timetables and give early notice when planning for change in routine.
- Give clear indication from the start to finish of activities using timers or verbal prompts.
- Organise the environment with clearly defined areas for activities.
- Use things that interest them as a reward.
- Provide a quiet place to calm them down when dealing with behaviours stemming from sensory processing difficulties (e.g. Sound, smell, taste or feeling of textures).

■ **Contact us**

For enquiries, or if you wish to schedule an appointment with the Department of Psychological Medicine, please inform your child's doctor.

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Useful telephone number

Appointments / Specialist 6294-4050
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Autism Spectrum Disorders



Reg No 198904227G PDP/Masd0617

PATIENTS. AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO.

■ What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition which affects the brain development from early childhood. It is a lifelong condition, characterised by great difficulty in communicating and forming relationships with other people and in using language and abstract concepts.

The cause of autism remains unknown, however, one theory that has strong scientific evidence is that genetics play a significant role in contributing to the occurrence of ASD. Other factors that may contribute to ASD symptoms are deficits in the brain function. Rigidity, communication, and socialisation issues are the most common symptoms in all types of ASD.

■ Examples of socialisation issues related to ASD

- Not responding to their name by one year of age.
- Has difficulty in initiating social interactions with others or share enjoyment with others.
- Has difficulty in starting or responding to a conversation.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Has lack of appropriate facial expressions, (e.g. May smile while saying something sad).
- Unable to understand other people's feelings or express their own feelings.
- Does not understand personal space boundaries.
- Does not like physical contact.
- Wants to be alone.

■ Strategies to help socialisation issues

- Create awareness so that others can help to meet needs.
- Being there for your child and be encouraging.
- Empathise with their challenges.
- Use snack or meal times to teach about taking turns, and interaction in social situations.
- Reward good behaviour in social interaction (e.g. Sharing and being considerate to others).
- Use games to teach social skills.
- Create opportunities to discuss feelings (e.g. Music, art and drama).
- Educate how behaviour affects others (e.g. Educational cartoons).
- Use role play or real situations to teach tone of voice, facial expressions and personal space.
- Teach responsibility by assigning a household chore.
- Facilitate friendships through sleepovers and outings.
- Build on your child's strengths.
- Look out for small successes and celebrate the child's effort. **BE POSITIVE.**

■ Examples of communication issues related to ASD

- Has delayed speech and language skills.
- Will repeat words or phrases over and over (echolalia).
- Gives unrelated answers to questions asked.
- Does not play pretend (e.g. pretend to 'cook' food and serve to their parents).
- Has no understanding of jokes, sarcasm, or teasing.

■ Strategies to help communication

- Create the need for interaction (e.g. Discuss outing plans, recent movie or upcoming holiday).
- Give them time to respond.
- Be clear about expectations.
- Use simple language.
- Be specific. Instead of just saying "No!", tell them what you want them to do.
- Reinforce appropriate responses through compliments or rewards.
- Check what they are thinking; do not assume.
- Limit choices; too many choices can be overwhelming.
- Teach social use of language, through script card (e.g. When I answer the phone, I say "hello").