



# Autism Fact Sheet

Autism, also known as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a neurological variant that affects how people communicate and interact. As a spectrum condition, autism affects people in different ways and people with autism have varying support needs.

Autism characteristics can present in various combinations with a differing degree of severity. While some autistic people encounter challenges in navigating a neurotypical world, autism should be viewed as a form of neurodiversity, not a disadvantage. People with autism have a different way of thinking, communicating and interacting; these differences can enhance our world.

Roughly 1% of the world's population is estimated to have autism. In 2021, however, the CDC reported approximately 1 in 44 children in the US is diagnosed with ASD. Autism is diagnosed more frequently in males than in females, although it is suspected that women may receive late diagnoses after their autism was overlooked in childhood.

While the causes of autism are still being researched, evidence suggests a genetic component. Autism is not caused by a person's upbringing. Importantly, extensive research has shown that there is no link between autism and vaccines.

Autism is not a mental illness, although it is estimated that over one third of individuals with autism also have serious mental health issues, including anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). People with autism may also experience learning difficulties or learning disabilities; depending on the degree, one person with autism may always require extensive specialist support while another may be able to live independently with minimal support. Some people with autism are non-verbal and need alternative tools and techniques for communication, while others may be very talkative.

Although people with autism have varying support needs, they may share certain characteristics:

- Communication differences
- Social interaction differences
- Sensory differences
- Repetitive behaviour
- Preference for routine
- Highly focused interests
- Anxiety
- Meltdowns and shutdowns

The earlier a child receives an autism diagnosis, the sooner that child can receive support to address potential challenges and enable greater independence.

An incredible amount of brain development occurs in the first few years of a child's life, which means that any interventions during the early years are likely to be more impactful than those made later on in life. Early interventions have been shown to support communication, reduce the development of behavioural issues and greatly improve the quality of life for people with autism and their families.

## Bermuda Autism Support and Education (BASE)

BASE is a community-based, non-profit organisation devoted to helping individuals on the autism spectrum to realise their full potential.

We provide autism-related information, referral, advocacy, training, bursaries and support to families, professionals and community members. By increasing public awareness of autism and advocating for acceptance and accommodations, we help to ensure that people with autism are provided with ample opportunities and resources to be the very best versions of themselves.

Thanks to community donations, all of our services are offered completely free of charge.

[bermudaautism.bm](http://bermudaautism.bm)

We provide:

- Information and reference materials about autism
- Information and referral for autism services in Bermuda
- Parent support and training
- Community education for educators, health professionals and other interested parties
- Advocacy on behalf of individuals with autism and their families