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NINDS Asperger Syndrome Information Page

Condensed from [Asperger Syndrome Fact Sheet](#)

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What is Asperger Syndrome?

Asperger syndrome (AS) is a developmental disorder. It is an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), one of a distinct group of neurological conditions characterized by a greater or lesser degree of impairment in language and communication skills, as well as repetitive or restrictive patterns of thought and behavior. Other ASDs include: classic autism, Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (usually referred to as PDD-NOS). Unlike children with autism, children with AS retain their early language skills.

The most distinguishing symptom of AS is a child's obsessive interest in a single object or topic to the exclusion of any other. Children with AS want to know everything about their topic of interest and their conversations with others will be about little else. Their expertise, high level of vocabulary, and formal speech patterns make them seem like little professors. Other characteristics of AS include repetitive routines or rituals; peculiarities in speech and language; socially and emotionally inappropriate behavior and the inability to interact successfully with peers; problems with non-verbal communication; and clumsy and uncoordinated motor movements.

Children with AS are isolated because of their poor social skills and narrow interests. They may approach other people, but make normal conversation impossible by inappropriate or eccentric behavior, or by wanting only to talk about their singular interest. Children with AS usually have a history of developmental delays in motor skills such as pedaling a bike, catching a ball, or climbing outdoor play equipment. They are often awkward and poorly coordinated with a walk that can appear either stilted or bouncy.

Is there any treatment?

The ideal treatment for AS coordinates therapies that address the three core symptoms of the disorder: poor communication skills, obsessive or repetitive routines, and physical clumsiness. There is no single best treatment package for all children with AS, but most professionals agree that the earlier the intervention, the better.

An effective treatment program builds on the child's interests, offers a predictable schedule, teaches tasks as a series of simple steps, actively engages the child's attention in highly structured activities, and provides regular reinforcement of behavior. It may include social skills training, cognitive behavioral therapy, medication for co-existing conditions, and other measures.

What is the prognosis?

With effective treatment, children with AS can learn to cope with their disabilities, but they may still find social situations and personal relationships challenging. Many adults with AS are able to work successfully in mainstream jobs, although they may continue to need encouragement and moral support to maintain an independent life.

What research is being done?

Many of the Institutes at the NIH, including the NINDS, are sponsoring research to understand what causes AS and how it can be effectively treated. One study is using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to show how abnormalities in particular areas of the brain cause changes in brain function that result in the symptoms of AS and other ASDs. Other studies include a clinical trial testing the effectiveness of an anti-depressant in individuals with AS and HFA who exhibit high levels of obsessive/ritualistic behavior and a long-range study to collect and analyze DNA samples from a large group of children with AS and HFA and their families to identify genes and genetic interactions that are linked to AS and HFA.

NIH Patient Recruitment for Asperger Syndrome Clinical Trials

- ▶ [At NIH Clinical Center](#)
- ▶ [Throughout the U.S. and Worldwide](#)
- ▶ [NINDS Clinical Trials](#)

Organizations

[MAAP Services for Autism, Asperger Syndrome, and PDD](#)

P.O. Box 524
Crown Point, IN 46308
info@aspergersyndrome.org
<http://www.aspergersyndrome.org/> 
Tel: 219-662-1311
Fax: 219-662-1315

[Autism Society of America](#)

4340 East-West Highway
Suite 350
Bethesda, MD 20814
<http://www.autism-society.org> 
Tel: 301-657-0881 800-3AUTISM (328-8476)
Fax: 301-657-0869

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1600 Clifton Road, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30333
inquiry@cdc.gov
<http://www.cdc.gov>
Tel: 800-311-3435 404-639-3311/404-639-3543

[National Institute of Child Health and Human Development \(NICHD\)](#)

National Institutes of Health, DHHS
31 Center Drive, Rm. 2A32 MSC 2425
Bethesda, MD 20892-2425
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov>
Tel: 301-496-5133
Fax: 301-496-7101

[National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

National Institutes of Health, DHHS
6001 Executive Blvd. Rm. 8184, MSC 9663
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663
nimhinfo@nih.gov
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>
Tel: 301-443-4513/866-415-8051 301-443-8431 (TTY)
Fax: 301-443-4279

[Autism Science Foundation](#)

29 West 39th Street
Suite 502
New York, NY 10018
contactus@autismsciencefoundation.org
<http://www.autismsciencefoundation.org/> 
Tel: 212-391-3913
Fax: 212-228-3557

[Autism Speaks, Inc.](#)

1 East 33rd Street
4th Floor
New York, NY 10016
contactus@autismspeaks.org
<http://www.autismspeaks.org> 
Tel: 212-252-8584 (888) 288-4762
Fax: 212-252-8676

[National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities](#)

U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education Programs
1825 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009
nichcy@aed.org
<http://www.nichcy.org> 
Tel: 800-695-0285 202-884-8200
Fax: 202-884-8441

[National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences \(NIEHS\)](#)

National Institutes of Health, DHHS
111 T.W. Alexander Drive
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
webcenter@niehs.nih.gov
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov>
Tel: 919-541-3345

Related NINDS Publications and Information

- ▶ [NINDS Autism Information Page](#)
Autism information sheet compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).
- ▶ [Autism Fact Sheet](#)
Autism fact sheet compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

Publicaciones en Español

- ▶ [Síndrome de Asperger](#)
- ▶ [Autismo](#)

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