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Subject: Autism



Dear ,

A developmental diagnoses that is becoming more common in children is Autism. The CDC estimates that 1 in 88 children is diagnosed with Autism. It is estimated that about 400,000 people in the United States have some form of Autism, making it the 3rd most common developmental disability. Not much is known about the disorder or its causes, but there are some things as a foster and adoptive parent that you can do to help your child.

What is Autism?

Autism is a developmental disability that typically appears in children within the first 3 years of life. Autism interferes with the normal development of social and communication skills, in addition to reasoning skills. The disorder makes it challenging for children and adults to relate and interact with others. A person diagnosed with Autism may have a hard time with verbal and non-verbal communication.

What are the causes of Autism?

The exact causes of Autism are unknown. Boys are four times as likely to be diagnosed with Autism than girls, but it can affect anyone. Individuals from all ethnic, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds are diagnosed with some form of Autism every year.

What are the different types of Autism?

You may have heard mental health professionals refer to Autism as being on a "spectrum". This means that there are multiple diagnoses under this umbrella spectrum, and each diagnoses can have a different intensity level. The following are the three most common Autism spectrum diagnoses:

-Autistic Disorder: More commonly known as "**Autism**", individuals diagnosed with Autistic Disorder typically have language delays, social and communication challenges, intellectual disabilities, and unusual behaviors.

-Asperger: Individuals diagnosed with Aspergers may have more "mild" symptoms of Autism. Typically people diagnosed with Aspergers may social and communication challenges, but they typically do not have language or intellectual disabilities.

-Pervasive Developmental Disorder–NOS (PDD-NOS): Also known as "**Atypical Autism**", PDD-NOS typically meet some of the criteria for Autistic Disorder and Aspergers, but not all of the criteria. Typically individuals diagnosed with PDD-NOS have social and communication challenges.

How do I know if my child may have some form of Autism?

Children diagnosed with Autism may show "normal" signs of development up until 24 months, when there is a sharp decline in their communication and social skills. A child may stop talking, stop making eye contact, may become anxious and stressed if there are changes in routine, etc. Other signs and symptoms include not playing "pretend"; showing a preference for only playing alone; displaying a hard time explaining their feelings or understanding the feelings of others; showing a delay in speech and language skills; repeating words and phrases; becoming distraught over minor changes; or bodily reactions such as flapping their hands, banging their head, rocking back and forth, or spinning in circles.

If you notice that your child is not on target developmentally for their age, talk to your child's pediatrician or visit a developmental screening clinic in your area. Your child's pediatrician may also be able to refer you to a developmental pediatrician, a child neurologist, or a child psychologist or psychiatrist.

How can I help my child?

Early intervention improves outcomes, such as living alone, holding a job, maintaining friendships and relationships, etc. Other types of treatments include behavior and communication approaches, dietary changes, or medication. You can learn more about the

different types of treatments on the [CDC-ASDs](#) site.

Additional Information

For more information on Autism, check out the following materials:

[Autism Spectrum Disorders: An Overview](#) - this presentation defines and presents basic information about autism spectrum disorders.

[Books About Autism Spectrum Disorder For Young People](#) - a list of books for children and young adults to learn more about autism spectrum disorder.

[What is Autism?](#) - informational brochure that gives an overview of typical signs and symptoms of autism.

[Autism and Mental Illness](#) - guidebook on mental health issues that effect those diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

[I Have a Friend With Autism](#) - pamphlet for kids.

[What is Asperger's Disorder?](#) - brochure that gives an overview of the typical signs and symptoms of Asperger's Disorder.

[Asperger's Disorder, Information for Kids Only](#) - brochure geared towards kids teaching them about Asperger's.

The above resources were found courtesy of the [Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at USF \(CARD\)](#).

[Lunch-N-Net video](#) - Check out Lunch-N-Net's video on Autism and other developmental disabilities. The video can be found by visiting the Lunch-N-Net site and clicking on the "**Past Episode**" button. The video can be found under **Season 2**, and it is titled "**Episode 11: The One About Autism and Developmental Delays**".

Resources

You may find the following resources helpful:

[Autism Society of America](#) - Primary source for information on autism. You can find a state or local chapter near you.

[Autism Speaks](#) - An organization dedicated to funding research, providing awareness, and advocacy. Downloadable resources are available on their site.

[AutismWeb](#) - An informational site for parents, run by parents.

[Job Accommodation Network \(JAN\)](#) - Helps people with disabilities strengthen their employability and educates employers on the value people with disabilities bring to their workplace.

[MCH Library at Georgetown University: Knowledge Path](#) - provides resources for educators, parents, mental health professionals, and policymakers.

[National Autism Center \(NAC\)](#) - evidence based interventions for autism spectrum disorder.

[National Autism Resources](#) - provides links, games, and toys for people on the autism spectrum.

[Science Daily](#) - tracks the latest news and research on autism.

The above links and more can be found on [CARD](#).

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Autism Spectrum Disorders](#) - provides facts, diagnoses, treatment information, data, articles, free materials, and links to other sites about autism.

[CDC: Autism Spectrum Disorders links](#) - list of helpful sites for parents, educators, and researchers.

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