

# Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability resulting in social, communication, and behavioral challenges.

Children with ASD have difficulty interacting and communicating socially, and they show limited and repetitive patterns of behavior. They may rely on routines, and may be sensitive to changes in routines or the environment. They are often delayed in acquiring motor (movement) skills, and may have difficulty with motor coordination, postural control, and imitating the movements of other people.

## Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of ASD begin in late infancy or early childhood, continue throughout the lifespan, vary widely, and range from mild to severe. ASD is defined as a “spectrum” disorder because of the many different presentations of symptoms. Symptoms can be related to social communication and interaction—restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior; and movement.

The 2 core signs that indicate a person may have ASD are:

- Difficulties in social communication and interaction
- A tendency to engage in restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior

## HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

Specialists who typically diagnose ASD (or decide that an individual does not have ASD), include developmental pediatricians, child neurologists, child psychologists, and child psychiatrists.

After a diagnosis is made, a physical therapist will conduct a thorough evaluation, and develop an individualized plan to work with your child, family, and education team to help your child:

- Improve participation in daily routines at home and school
- Acquire new motor skills
- Develop better coordination and a more stable posture
- Improve reciprocal play skills, such as throwing and catching a ball with another person
- Develop motor imitation skills (seeing another person perform an action and then copying that action)
- Increase fitness and stamina



About  
**1 in 68**  
children in the  
United States has  
been identified  
with ASD.

ASD is almost  
**5 times**  
more common  
in boys than girls.