

# Autism Acceptance Month Resources

**April is Autism Acceptance Month!** This month, we are excited to celebrate and promote acceptance for the condition that occurs in one in every 36 children (U.S. 2023). Autism Acceptance Month encourages individuals to focus on acceptance, celebrate differences, and be more inclusive. This month also serves as a reminder to be empathetic, warm, and welcoming to individuals with autism and their families.

## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism, often referred to as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a brain developmental disorder caused by genetic mutation and sometimes, environmental triggers. ASD may affect an individual's behavior, ability to interact, communicate, and progress.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OR SYMPTOMS OF AUTISM?

ASD can vary in severity of symptoms, age of onset, and the presence of various features such as language and intellectual ability. Individuals with ASD may:

- **Interact with others differently.** They may have difficulty understanding and expressing emotions or will convey personal attachment in a different manner.
- **Not effectively use spoken language.** Some have echolalia, a repeating of words or phrases that have been said to them. People with autism often have difficulty understanding the nonverbal aspect of language such as social cues, body language and vocal qualities (pitch, tone, and volume).
- **Have difficulty relating to objects and events.** They may have a great need for "sameness" that can make them upset if objects in their environment or time schedules change. Children with autism may not "play" with toys in the same manner as their peers and may become fixated to specific objects.
- **Overreact to sensory stimuli that they see, hear, touch, feel or taste.** Or, conversely, they may not react at all to various stimuli from the environment.
- **Have a different rate of development, especially in the areas of communication, social and cognitive skills.** In contrast, motor development may occur at a typical rate. Sometimes skills will appear in children with autism at the expected rate or time and then disappear.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong disability that is generally diagnosed before the age of three years old. However, children are often misdiagnosed or not diagnosed until later in life.



## COULD MY CHILD HAVE AUTISM?

The key to getting supports for individuals with autism is early intervention. Autism is a lifelong spectrum disorder that affects individuals differently and in varying degrees. Getting the right help at the earliest stage of life can help a child gain skills they need to be successful.

- First and foremost, **follow your instincts**. Don't assume that your child will catch up.
- **Share your concerns with your pediatrician**. Consider seeing a doctor who is familiar with autism. The [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) offers an online pediatrician referral service, searchable by specialty and location.
- **Know your rights**. As the government mandates services, consult the [National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities](#) and your local early intervention lead agency. The lead agency is required to provide a timely evaluation, typically within 45 days of being contacted. If your child is experiencing developmental delays in one or more of the following areas, you're eligible for free early intervention services: cognitive, physical, communication, social, emotional, or adaptive skills.
- **Get a diagnosis**. Autism can be diagnosed as early as 18 months old. Many children are diagnosed before age five, although too many children are still misdiagnosed or not diagnosed until later in life.
- **Seek help** from community service and treatment providers like Easterseals MORC.

For more information and to know more about possible signs, click [HERE](#).

## BOOKS THAT DISCUSS AUTISM

- **[Ella Auite](#)**: A story of a 4th grader with autism battling society, written by an individual with autism.
- **[My Brother Charlie](#)**: A story about a young boy who has autism, showing the challenges he faces but also highlighting the talents he has.
- **[All My Stripes](#)**: A Story for Children with Autism – teaches people to embrace who we are and the people around us. Helpful for children with autism as they follow a young zebra who learns and understands how he is different from his classmates.
- **[Uniquely Wired](#)**: This heartwarming story features Zak, a young boy living with autism who wants you to understand how he experiences the sights and sounds of the world around him.

## RESOURCES

- **Seal of Approval** - April 2024 edition: See which businesses or activities made the Seal of Approval!
  - To be considered for the Easterseals MORC Seal of Approval, the activity, event, or location must be (or have accommodations for) sensory and/or disability friendly. Check out the list by clicking [HERE](#).
- Are you or a loved one currently living with autism? Click [HERE](#) for information and multiple resources available on our website.
- **Autism Resources:**
  - **Autism Alliance of Michigan**
    - [Independent Living Toolkit](#)
    - [Community - Autism Alliance of Michigan](#)
    - [Upcoming Webinars](#)
  - [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#)
  - [Autism Society of America \(ASA\)](#)
  - [Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#)
  - [Golden Steps ABA](#)
  - [Center of Disease Control and Prevention: Autism Information Center](#)

