

What is Autism?

Understanding the Fundamentals

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The information included here is based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (DSM-V) and Public Health Canada. To gain a fulsome and representative level of understanding about Autism, it is integral to also consider the lived experiences and perspectives of self-advocates who have Autism. Please refer to the self-advocate websites and resources at the bottom of this page.

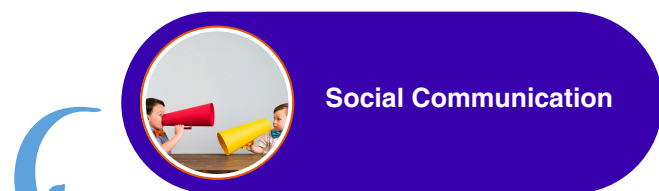
Autism is a lifelong neuro-developmental disorder. It is characterized by challenges in **communication and social interactions** and **restrictive and repetitive behaviour**. Autism is known as a spectrum disorder because characteristics can vary across persons in type and severity. Symptoms can also change over time. Diagnoses are separated by level of severity which refers to the amount of support a person may need.



Prevalence of Autism

1 in 66 Canadians are diagnosed with Autism (National Autism Spectrum Disorder Surveillance System, 2018). Research shows that Autism is four times more likely in boys than in girls. However, prevalence for females diagnosed with Autism may be inaccurate due to symptoms presenting differently than in boys. Autism occurs across all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Features of Autism



This may include:

- ◆ little or inconsistent eye contact
- ◆ difficulties with the back and forth of conversations
- ◆ difficulties understanding others' points of view
- ◆ difficulties understanding non-verbal communication cues (e.g., body language, facial expressions, gestures)
- ◆ difficulty developing and maintaining friendships
- ◆ lack of sharing interests, success, accomplishments



This may include:

- ◆ repetitive motor movement, use of objects, or speech
- ◆ heightened interest in certain topics
- ◆ insistence on sameness
- ◆ inflexibility to changes in routine
- ◆ pre-occupations and fixed ritualized behaviours that interfere in daily functioning

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2018, April 9). Government of Canada. Retrieved from

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/autism-spectrumdisorderchildren-youth-canada-2018.html#a2-3>

American Psychiatric Association (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., Text Revision).

Autistic Self Advocacy Network: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>

For more information, contact Kerry's Place Autism Services:

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Resource Portal**