

Autism Disparities

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a broad range of disorders that affect a child's communication and social behaviors, and the effects of these disorders can range from mild to severe. One common autism spectrum disorder is Asperger's syndrome. Autism occurs in persons of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, and no two individuals with autism are the same. An estimated one-third of people with autism are non-verbal. There is no medical test that can diagnose autism.

Quick Facts

- There is no cure for autism, and most individuals with ASD will need support and services throughout their lives.
- The CDC estimates that 1 in 54 children has autism.
- More than half of young adults with autism remain unemployed and unenrolled in higher education in the two years after high school. Nearly half of 25-year olds with autism have never had a paying job.
- 84% of individuals with autism in California are under the age of 22.
- Autism greatly varies from person to person (no two people with autism are alike).
- The majority of autism costs in the U.S. are for adult services—an estimated \$175 to \$196 billion a year, compared to \$61 to \$66 billion a year for children.
- Signs of autism may include deficits in social communication and interaction in a variety of contexts, difficulty engaging in back-and-forth conversation, and the absence of interest in forming friendships with peers.
- There is a significant need for services to help young people successfully transition to adulthood with the greatest levels of independence as possible.

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RISK FACTORS

The causes of autism are unclear, but research suggests they're complex and include genetic, biological and environmental risk factors.

A



There is an increased risk in autism when there are pregnancy and birth complications (e.g. extreme prematurity [before 26 weeks], low birth weight or multiple pregnancies (twin, triplet, etc.).

B

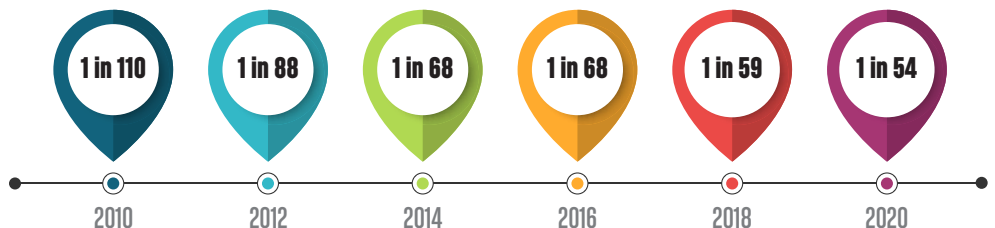


Children whose families lived near highways at birth are at a higher risk for autism.

C



Children born to older parents (especially older fathers) are at a higher risk for having ASD.



Estimated Autism Prevalence

The CDC's reported prevalence of ASD has been higher in recent years, and this trend is consistent across data sources. It is unclear how much this is due to changes to the clinical definition of ASD (which may include more people than previous definitions) and better efforts to diagnose ASD (which would identify people with ASD who were not previously identified).

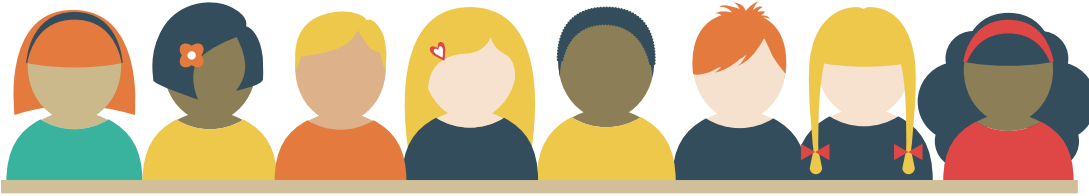


Childhood vaccines not linked to autism

Scientists have conducted extensive research over the last two decades to determine whether there is any link between childhood vaccinations and autism. The results of this research is clear: **Vaccines do not cause autism.** The American Academy of Pediatrics has compiled a comprehensive list of this research. [Read more](#)

Disparities Among Ethnicities

Minority groups tend to be diagnosed later and less often.



1

Stigma, lack of access to healthcare services due to low income or non-citizenship and language barriers are potential problems in identifying children with ASD especially among Hispanic children.

2

A Georgia State University **study** noted that black children are diagnosed with ASD at older ages than white children and children of other races.

3

Black children are also nearly twice as likely as children of other races to be misdiagnosed with disruptive behavior disorders before receiving a diagnosis of ASD.



Getting Help

In many areas across the country, parents and caregivers do not have access to training on how to care for a child with autism.

Many children with ASD experience behavioral problems such as tantrums, noncompliance, and aggression. These behaviors can limit the child's ability to benefit from education, and habilitative services may also increase social isolation.

Regional centers in California can provide a wide array of services for families that have children with autism. Each center provides diagnosis and assessment of eligibility, and helps plan, access, coordinate and monitor services and supports.

The point of entry for intervention services could be the regional center in your local area.

■ In California, there are many local resources to help find and access many services available to individuals and their families:

State of California, Department of Developmental Services

■ In New York City, the **New York Child Resource Center** provides early intervention services and evaluations throughout Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Nassau County

■ The **National Autism Association** provides resources for support groups, autism toolkits, training programs for first responders and professionals as well as schools. They also host free webinars and can offer physician and resource center suggestions and specialist recommendations

Additional Resources

- **Autism Speaks**
- **Health Recovery Solutions**
- **CDC**
- **The Help Group**

Up to 40% of Families From low-resource communities struggle to access evaluation and diagnostic services.



Early Detection and Telehealth

Symptoms of autism can often be detected at 18 months or earlier. Some of the early signs may be recognizable within the first year of life. Telehealth can play an essential role in detection.

Often, children with autism and their families live too far away from care and support and cannot access it due to high cost or limited availability. Telehealth can be a diagnostic tool in rural areas and can be a valuable resource where access to qualified specialists is not possible.

Specialist wait times for those that do seek screening and diagnostic testing can be tremendous. These constraints are often compounded by low availability of specialists (especially in underserved communities). Up to 40% of children and families from low resource communities struggle immensely to access evaluation and diagnostic services.

Not all children show all the signs. Professional evaluation is critical. If you are concerned that your child may have a developmental delay or learning issues, every state has an early intervention program for children from birth to age 3 that provides early intervention help. This is why it is important to detect autism before age 3; early detection increases a child's chances for success in school and life overall.