



# **LINK® Autism Facts**

## **Symptoms (Age: Birth – 2)**

Many parents of autistic children suspect that something is wrong by the time their child is 18 months old and seek help by the time the child is age 2. Atypical behaviors you might notice include difficulties in:

- Pretend play
- Social interactions
- Verbal and nonverbal communication
- Loss of developing language skills

Other behaviors you might notice, include:

- Extreme sensitivities to visual stimulation, hearing, touch, smell, or taste (for example, they may refuse to wear "itchy" clothes and become distressed if they are forced to wear the clothes)
- Maintain bound to their routines and become extremely upset when routines are changed
- Perform repeated body movements, such as arm flapping or head banging
- Show unusual attachments to objects and feel the need to collect objects

## **Symptoms (Age: Birth – 99)**

**Communication Concerns:**

- Cannot start or maintain a social conversation (lack of social reciprocity)
- Communicates with gestures instead of words (or mono-syllabic utterances)
- Develops language slowly or not at all (or loses language)
- Does not adjust gaze to look at objects that others are looking at (cannot share joint attention)
- Does not refer to self correctly (for example, says "you want water" when the child means "I want water")
- Does not point to direct others' attention to objects (occurs in the first 14 months of life)
- Repeats words or memorized passages, such as commercials or movie scripts verbatim
- Uses nonsense rhyming (cannot rhyme)
- Becomes easily confused in language – maybe confused by bark from a dog versus bark on a tree

**Social interaction:**

- Does not make friends
- Does not play interactive games (engages in parallel play)
- Is withdrawn
- May not respond to eye contact or smiles, or may avoid eye contact
- May treat others as if they are objects
- Prefers to spend time alone, rather than with others
- Shows a lack of empathy

**Note: This document in no way offers medical advice. For any and all diagnoses, please see your health care professional or neuropsychologist. This document is for information only.**



## **LINK® Autism Facts Cont.**

### **Response to sensory information:**

- May or may not startle at loud noises
- Has increased or decreased senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste
- May find normal noises painful and hold hands over ears
- May withdraw from physical contact because it is over-stimulating or overwhelming
- Rubs surfaces, mouths or licks objects
- Seems to have a heightened or low response to pain

### **Play Behaviors:**

- Doesn't imitate the actions of others
- Prefers solitary or ritualistic play (engages in parallel play)
- Shows little pretend or imaginative play
- Characters in play do not interact with one another

### **Behaviors:**

- Has intense tantrums
- Limited to a single topic or task (perseveration) (Titanic, sea life, trains, lizards, sharks)
- Has a short attention span especially in areas of disinterest
- Has very narrow interests
- Is extremely overactive or very passive
- Shows aggression to others or self
- Shows a strong need for sameness (routine)
- Uses repetitive body movements

### **Classroom Observations:**

Teachers may notice all of these symptoms or a combination of these symptoms. In terms of classroom behaviors and routines, you may notice that students with autism do not willingly participate in the social aspects of the classroom. They may withdraw easily, tantrum, or become extremely upset if other students touch them or "invade" their space. You may also notice that the child may fixate on a specific topic or object to the exclusion of other interests.

From a cognitive perspective, you may easily notice that students on the spectrum have some strengths and limitations in their abilities or interests. Reading may be delayed or non-existent. Despite these concerns, children may advance in grade level, and teachers of children in older grades may be perplexed and wonder why the child was passed onto the next grade level.

If you notice that a child in your classroom seems to have delays that correspond with any of the concerns that you see described on this list, please discuss your concerns with the child's parents. Link Autism Leadership is dedicated to providing the best and most appropriate educational resources to teachers and parents. Our curriculum will be available soon.