

Autism

Autism is a complex developmental disorder caused by an abnormality in the brain. Although symptoms may vary greatly from one affected person to another, there are **clear behavioural signs that can be detected prior to the age of 2 years, even within the first year of life.**

Children with autism have challenges with:

- ✓ **Social interactions:**
 - Don't respond when name is called
 - Rarely make eye contact when interacting with other people
 - Don't smile socially
 - More interested in looking at objects than at people's faces
 - Avoid &/or ignore other children when they approach him / her

- ✓ **Verbal and non-verbal communication**
 - Loss or change of any language or social skills at any age
 - Delayed or absent speech
 - Peculiar speech patterns
 - Language or gestures not used to convey meaning (echolalia) or to communicate wants and needs

- ✓ **Repetitive behaviours** such as rocking or hand-twisting (self-injurious behaviours such as head-banging)

- ✓ **Unusual or severely limited activities and interests**
 - Lacks interest in toys, demonstrate a strong preference for a particular toy to the exclusion of others (e.g., train) or plays with them in an unusual way (e.g., lining up, spinning, opening / closing parts rather than using the whole toy)
 - Has to perform activities in a special way or sequence
 - Severe difficulty accepting changes in routines or transitions from one activity to another

Who can give the diagnosis of Autism :

Any child presenting with some of these symptoms should be **referred as early as possible** to a paediatrician, developmental paediatrician or psychologist.

Other referrals needed:

There are other professionals who play an important role in the intervention of autism. The earlier referrals are made, the earlier effective treatment can begin.

- ✓ *Speech-Language Pathologists.* Children 0-5 years of age can be referred to the **Early Childhood Speech and Language Service located at Porcupine Health Unit** for an assessment and intervention of communication. To refer call 705-267-1181

- ✓ *Occupational therapist and physiotherapist.* Children can be referred to the **Children's Treatment Centre or Integrated Services for Northern Children** for an assessment of fine and gross motor skills and sensory integration. To refer call 705-264-4700

- ✓ *Intensive Behaviour Intervention Therapist.* Children can be referred to **Child and Family Services of Timmins and District** if they qualify for Intensive Behaviour Intervention (as determined by psychological assessment).

- ✓ *Autism Treatment Team.* Children who are diagnosed but do not qualify for the Intensive Behaviour Intervention Program can be referred to **Child and Family Services of Timmins and District** for treatment, case management and home/school consultation.