

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Imagine a song stuck in your head...and it never goes away.

Imagine people's voices sounding so loud they're like fire engines.

Imagine your soft cotton T-shirt feeling like a burlap bag.

Imagine not being able to feel food in your mouth, or a full bladder.

Imagine someone's simple touch feeling like fire.

Imagine having feeling in your hair and the pain of having it cut.

Image having autism.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF AUTISM?

Autism is made up of many different symptoms. Some people are affected very severely, while others are much milder. Children and adults who have autism may show a combination of symptoms:

- Repeat words, or not talk very much or not at all.
- Not be able to understand emotions (an angry voice or smile).
- Resist physical contact, or be very friendly, even with strangers.
- Want to lick or smell everything.
- Not want to look at you directly, yet look into space for a long time.
- Seem to act like they are deaf even though nothing is wrong with their hearing.
- Not know how to play with toys like other children their age.
- Not play pretend or imitation games (peek-a-boo, sooo big, patty cake).
- Hit themselves, bang their heads, and bite themselves because they don't feel the pain like we do.
- Be described as off in their own world. You may feel like it is impossible to reach your child with autism.
- Act as if you didn't exist.
- Laugh and giggle for no apparent reason (or none that you can figure out).
- Spin objects or spin themselves a lot.
- Have temper tantrums for reasons that are not clear to you.
- Want to do things in the same order and same way every day. Changes in routines may result in tantrums.
- Not like the feel of their clothes and want to take them off all the time or not change them when needed.
- Only like certain textures of food or not like to eat very much at all.
- Not recognize himself or herself in a picture.

IS THERE A CURE FOR AUTISM?

Right now there is no known cure for autism, but taking action and getting treatment for your child is very important. The sooner a child gets treatment, the better the chances are that your child will be able to make progress. With the right treatment, many of the strange behaviors can be changed. Some different kinds of treatment or therapy include:

- occupational therapy
- behavior modification
- speech and language therapy
- auditory training
- medications and
- special diets.