



Learn more about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition that affects, among other things, the way an individual relates to their environment and how they interact with others.

Autism can present very differently in children, and the word Spectrum is used because of the wide-ranging level of difficulties that children may experience and the degree to which they may be affected. Some children need little assistance while others have learning challenges that require continued specialist support.

Typically, the most common areas of difficulty for children are in:

- social communication
- social interaction
- restricted or repetitive behaviours and interests
- unusual sensory interests, such as sniffing objects or intently watching moving objects
- sensory sensitivities such as an aversion to everyday sounds and textures, and
- intellectual impairment or learning difficulties

How is ASD diagnosed?

If you are worried about your child, there are a number of signs that could suggest Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), particularly in social and communication skills, and restricted or repetitive behaviours.

Perhaps your child looks away when you speak to them, doesn't return your smile, has a lack of interest in other children or cannot copy simple motor movements such as clapping hands.

They may have difficulty coping with change, have unusual language patterns or motor movements, such as hand flapping or walking on tiptoes.

Maybe they become distressed on everyday sounds such as a hair dryer or blender, use their peripheral vision to look at objects, or love or avoid certain textures.

When ASD is Diagnosed

Once a child is diagnosed it opens access to government funding entitlements and services. It is also an important first step in better understanding why your child has not been achieving developmental milestones, or has been displaying unusual interests or behaviours.

The next step is to develop management plans that will help your child to develop and improve their communication skills, social interactions and behaviours.

Inclusive Directions offers the following support:

Diagnosis – what does it involve?

Inclusive Directions now offers a diagnostic assessment which involves a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of behaviour, development and history in an attempt to determine whether an individual meets the criteria for a diagnosis or if there are any other alternative explanations for the presenting behaviours. Our clinicians do this through structured interviews, direct observation of behaviour, and standardised clinical assessment tools. On some occasions, observations at childcare/school are necessary.

The interview and assessment tools used will vary depending upon the age of the individual and their history. A diagnostic assessment for a young child would generally involve asking the child's parents/carers specific questions about a range of relevant areas while also engaging the child in structured play and tasks to observe their behaviour. Diagnosis involving an adult will involve an interview with the adult client and any significant other (eg. partner, parent), where possible. Formal testing of intellectual ability and/or communicative ability may also be included in any assessment if required to assess functioning and exclude alternative explanations for the behaviour.

Dual/Single Diagnostic Assessments for ASD

Dual: If a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder is given the individual may be able to register with Autism SA. To be eligible for registration with Autism SA, a diagnosis must be agreed upon by two professionals from different disciplines. We offer a dual diagnostic assessment that means you will have the assessment with both a psychologist and a speech pathologist at the same time. It is a three-hour process, which is split into two 1.5 hour sessions.

Single: We can also offer single diagnostic assessments, by either a psychologist or speech pathologist. A single diagnostic assessment is a diagnostic assessment carried out by one professional (either a psychologist or speech pathologist). If you don't already have a diagnosis by a professional registered with Autism SA, a single diagnosis does not allow you to claim support from Autism SA, if that is desired. This means that if the single assessment results in a diagnosis, a second assessment will need to be conducted with a professional from a different discipline to confirm the diagnosis. If a GP or paediatrician has put in place a correct referral you may be entitled to Medicare rebates.

According to research, a reliable diagnosis of autism can be made in children younger than two years, and as young as 10-months old.

Research proves that children are most responsive to intervention when they are in their early years. So, when a reliable diagnosis is made during the preschool years, early intervention results in a far greater likelihood of the child experiencing improved development – particularly in language and intellectual development.

Receiving a diagnosis can be an emotionally difficult time, but with an early diagnosis you and your family, and the educators who work with your child, can make decisions about implementing early intervention programs, learn more about ASD, and plan for the future.

St Marys

Flinders Therapy House
143 Daws Rd, St Marys SA 5042

Salisbury

28B Commercial Rd
Salisbury SA 5108

Regional

Mt Gambier | Pt Lincoln
By Appointment

Contact

(08) 7325 8600
clientsupport@directions.org.au