

# Autism Awareness Month

**APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH.** During this important time, Fraser is working to gain visibility for our country's fastest-growing developmental disability. It is our hope that increased awareness will lead to early diagnosis and treatment for more children. If you or someone you know needs services related to an autism spectrum disorder or other cognitive disability, please call 612-331-9413 or visit [www.fraser.org](http://www.fraser.org) for information.



## What is autism?

Autism is a neurologically-based developmental disability that affects the way a child's brain develops and the ability to communicate, reason and interact with others.

## How common is autism?

Autism spectrum disorders affect 1 in 150 children. Autism is more common than juvenile diabetes, childhood cancer and AIDS combined.

## What does it mean that autism is a "spectrum" disorder?

In a spectrum disorder, symptoms and characteristics present themselves in a wide variety of combinations, from mild to severe and in any combination.

## What is Asperger's Disorder?

In layman's terms, Asperger's is a disorder on the autism spectrum. Individuals with Asperger's Disorder are often considered mildly affected by autism in the sense that there are no significant language and cognitive delays. Persons with Asperger's experience impairments in social interactions and restriction in activities.

## What are the signs of autism?

Parents, teachers and medical professionals may look for these behaviors:

- not responding to name;
- doesn't point or wave goodbye;
- used to say a few words, but now doesn't;
- intense tantrums;
- odd movement (twirling, flapping, rocking);
- poor eye contact;
- unusual attachment to objects or schedules;
- lining up items in a certain order.

Having one or more of these signs indicates the need for a developmental screening.

## When should a child be evaluated for autism?

Most pediatricians perform a developmental screening at well-child visits during the preschool years. These screenings allow the doctor to monitor the child's development and look for red flags. If the doctor has reason for concern, he/she will refer the

family to a specialist (such as Fraser) for an evaluation.

## What causes autism?

Although a specific cause of autism is not known, current research links autism to biological or neurological differences in the brain. A pattern of autism or related disabilities in families suggests there is a genetic basis to the disorder, most likely involving a combination of genes.

## Is there a cure for autism?

In the medical sense, there is no cure for the differences in the brain which result in autism. However, with appropriate intervention, many of the associated behaviors can be positively changed. In some cases, the individual may appear to no longer have autism. However, the majority of children and adults continue to exhibit some manifestations of autism to some degree throughout their lives. Evidence shows that early intervention results in dramatically positive outcomes for young children with autism.

## Fraser – Minnesota's Leader in Autism Services

Experience matters! Many organizations provide autism services, but few can match the expertise and experience of Fraser.

- Fraser has served Minnesota since 1935 and is committed to families in this community.
- When it comes to autism, one size does not fit all. Fraser programs address needs in behavior, skill building and relationship development. We partner with each family to determine which services are the best fit.
- Fraser offers one-stop shopping by providing a continuum of services for children, adolescents and adults.

## Resources for Parents and Professionals

Download a free copy of the Fraser Autism Resource Directory at [www.fraser.org](http://www.fraser.org). This valuable tool helps parents navigate the complex educational and medical service systems.

Find a variety of helpful tips related to autism spectrum disorders at [www.fraser.org/tip\\_sheets](http://www.fraser.org/tip_sheets). Topics include: developing coping skills, choosing a dental provider, making a weighted blanket, and many more.

