AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



Definition	Etiology	Epidemiology
Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	ASD is thought to have both genetic and environmental contributing factors, but the exact etiology is unknown.	1 in 44 children in the US are affected. (CDC 2021)
is a group of neurodevelopmental syndromes characterized by a range		ASD is 4x more common in boys than girls.
of restricted, repetitive behaviors and communication impairments.		ASD affects all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

Clinical features

Impairment in social interaction

Impairment in communication and imaginative activites

Restricted activites and interests

- Difficulty forming interpersonal relationships
- Aversion to affection and physical contact
- Inability to process feelings of others

Absent language or immature structure or utterances

Absent or inappropriate nonverbal communication

- Lack of response or overreaction to stimuli
- Restricted or repetitive play
- Attachment to certain objects
- Resistance/agitation to changes in the environment
- Stereotyped body movements and verbalization
- Self-injurious behaviors

Diagnosis	Presentation
Generally appears early in childhood (12–18 months)	ASD occurs on a spectrum
ASD can usually be diagnosed by 2–3 years of age by an experienced professional.	Mild — Severe
Diagnosis is based on the presence of developmental delays and behavioral symptoms.	Symptoms vary from person to person and can change over time.

Education

An ASD diagnosis can affect the entire family. Nurses can help link families to local support and resources.

Clients with ASD can be at higher risk for injuries. It is important to teach family members how to keep clients safe.

Early intervention leads to positive long-term effects and skill development.

While there is no cure for ASD, there are multiple treatment modalities that can help improve the lives of clients with ASD and their families.

Nurses may help connect clients with resources for:

- Behavioral therapy
- School-based therapy
- Speech and language therapy
- Social skill training
- Occupational therapy
- Pharmacologic treatment
- Physical therapy

NOTES



