

Step 1: General Development Surveillance

Early Years: Indicators of ASD



Communication	Social	Repetitive Behaviours and Restricted Interests	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed speech sounds, babbling, and/or stops using words they used to say • Repeating words or phrases over and over • An unusual tone of voice: flat affect, sing-song voice, or robot-like prosody • Using another person's hand as a tool instead of using words • Not responding to their name or appearing not to hear when spoken to • Difficulties coordinating and/or using eye contact, gestures, sounds or words all at the same time (joint attention) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unusual eye contact—can be absent, fleeting, or even prolonged. • Not showing you or drawing your attention to things to share interest • Rarely spontaneously imitating actions • Engaging in little to no pretend play • Preferring to play alone rather than alongside (parallel play) or with other children • Playing with toys the same way every time • Social behaviours that go beyond typical “shyness” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unusual ways of moving hands, fingers, or whole body • Rituals such as lining up toys/objects or repeating words over and over • Unusual focus or attachment to a particular toy or to objects such as strings, rocks, straws, spoons, etc. • Interest in specific actions or activities to a degree that interferes with social interaction • Unusual sensory interests such as sniffing objects or spinning the wheels of a toy car • Unusual reaction to sensations like sounds, smells, tastes or textures • Over-reliance on routines and/or getting upset by minor changes in a routine or environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant loss of previously acquired milestones or skills (i.e., developmental regression - the most frequently reported regression is loss of language, followed by loss of social-emotional connectedness) • Unusual eating and sleeping habits • Unusual or exaggerated mood or emotional reactions • Exaggerated or prolonged meltdowns/temper tantrums that may occur often. These may include self-injurious behaviours or aggression towards others

Note: Child <24 months old? Autism spectrum disorder is often signaled by *what we do not see* or the *absence* of foundational social-communicative behaviours such as pointing to share, responding to one's name, and use of a wide range of gestures and actions with objects. In contrast, *what we do see* is the *presence* of restricted or repetitive behaviours such as spinning, rocking, and unusual attachment to objects.

Step 1: General Development Surveillance

School-Age/Teen Years: Indicators of ASD



Communication	Social	Repetitive Behaviours and Restricted Interests	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with social chat/small talk • Difficulty with conversational interactions • Advanced verbal skills • Stereotyped speech • Literal interpretation • Difficulty following instructions with more than one or two steps • Difficulty answering questions, especially "wh-" questions • Unusual vocal rhythm, monotonous tone, odd inflections, and/or difficulty modulating the volume of voice • Difficulty reading, interpreting, and using nonverbal cues, like body language or a person's tone of voice • Unusual use of eye contact • Limited use of gestures to express themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with friendships • Difficulty with social "rules" • Social vulnerability • Difficulty taking the perspective of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid adherence to rules and routines • Compulsive behaviours • Significant difficulty leaving electronics alone in comparison to peers • Unusual sensory sensitivities • Repetitive or unusual physical movements • Repetitive noises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven profile of skills • Aggression toward others or self-injurious behaviours • Mental health challenges such as depression, eating disorders, or significant anxiety • Weak executive function skills • Sleep difficulties • Poor self-regulation and difficulty self-calming

Step 1: General Development Surveillance

Adult Years: Indicators of ASD



Communication	Social	Repetitive Behaviours and Restricted Interests	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty participating effectively in social chat and/or social conversations • A preference to talk about one or two favorite topics • Difficulty functioning in group interactions or conversations that include rapid topic changes • Difficulty reading body language • Difficulty interpreting instructions that rely on taking the context into account (e.g., not knowing that sitting alone during break time at work is not what co-workers expect) • A flat, monotone, or robotic speaking pattern • A tendency to communicate in ways that others interpret as blunt, rude, or uninterested • A tendency to interpret language literally and have difficulty understanding idioms • Unusual use of eye contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty reading social cues (e.g., unable to recognize sarcasm, or figure out that what is being said is meant to be a secret) • Difficulty following social rules (e.g., “talking over” people, getting too close to others) • Difficulty functioning in large groups and preferring one-on-one social situations • High anxiety in social situations • Difficulty establishing and maintaining close friendships and /or romantic relationships • Difficulty reading and using facial expressions that communicate emotions • Difficulty regulating emotions or responding appropriately to the emotions of others • Difficulty expressing thoughts and feelings • Expresses a sense of feeling different from others without knowing why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional knowledge about one or more specific topics • Exaggerated responses to changes in routines, the unexpected, or when personal items are moved or rearranged • Repetitive behaviors • Rigid routines, schedules, and daily patterns that must be maintained • An insistence on sameness (e.g., wearing the same type of clothes or eating the same foods every day) • An exaggerated sensitivity to environmental distractions such as noise or bright lights in the workplace • Hypersensitivity or hyposensitivity to sensory input • An impulse to smell, feel, or collect/hoard specific items 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health issues/disorders such as anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and eating disorders • Employment difficulties • Being perceived by others as eccentric • Sleep difficulties • Poor self-regulation and difficulty self-calming (e.g., becomes very angry or frustrated quickly and goes from calm to outburst in seconds)