What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism Support of Michigan

www.autism-mi.org

- **Neurodevelopmental Condition:**

ASD is a condition related to brain development that impacts how a person perceives and socializes with others, causing problems in social interaction and communication.

- **Spectrum:**

ASD is a spectrum, meaning it affects people differently, with varying degrees of severity and a wide range of strengths and challenges.

- **Lifelong Condition:**

Autism is a lifelong condition, though the need for services and support can vary among individuals.

- **Challenges:**

People with ASD may experience challenges in social communication, social interaction, and may exhibit restricted, repetitive behaviors or interests.

- **Varied Abilities:**

Some individuals with autism can live independently, while others may require lifelong care and support.

- **Early Signs:**

While autism can be diagnosed at any age, differences generally appear in the first two years of life.

- **Not an Illness or a mental illness**

Autism is not an illness or disease, but rather a different way the brain works.

- **No Cure:**

There is no known cure for autism, but interventions and support can help individuals with ASD thrive.

Characteristics of Autism:

- **Social Communication and Interaction:**

    - Difficulties with social interaction, including understanding social cues and body language.
    - Challenges with verbal and nonverbal communication.
    - Difficulty forming and maintaining friendships.
    - May have difficulty understanding emotions or interpreting the emotions of others.
- **Restricted, Repetitive Behaviors or Interests:**
    - Engaging in repetitive movements or actions (e.g., hand flapping, rocking).
    - Having intense interests or fixations.
    - Following strict routines and having difficulty with changes.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:**
    - Some individuals with autism may have heightened or reduced sensitivity to sensory input (e.g., sounds, lights, textures).
- **Other Characteristics:**
    - Some individuals with autism may have language delays or difficulties.
    - Some may have intellectual disabilities, while others may be intellectually gifted.
    - May have co-occurring conditions, such as epilepsy, depression, anxiety, or ADHD.

Important Considerations:

- **Early Identification:**

Early identification and intervention are crucial for supporting individuals with autism.

- **Individualized Support:**

Support needs vary greatly among individuals with autism, so interventions should be tailored to their specific needs.

- **Autism is not a single condition:**

Autism is a spectrum, and individuals with autism can have a wide range of abilities and challenges.

- **Autism is not caused by vaccines:**

There is no scientific evidence to support the claim that vaccines cause autism.