

Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- **How many signs need to be present?**
 - To be considered for an autism diagnosis, the DSM-5 says that all three social communication signs and at least two of the four types of repetitive behaviours or restricted interests should be present. These patterns should have started in early childhood and impact your or your child's daily life.
- **Challenges with social communication and interaction:**
 - You or your child might have trouble starting or keeping conversations or may not share interests or emotions easily with others.
 - There could be difficulties using and understanding body language, facial expressions, eye contact, or gestures (for example, not making much eye contact or not using typical facial expressions).
 - It might be hard to make or keep friends, or to adjust to different social situations. Sometimes, there may be little interest in playing or spending time with others.
- **Repetitive behaviors or restricted interests:**
 - You may notice repeated movements or actions, like hand-flapping, rocking, lining up toys, or repeating words or phrases.
 - There could be a strong need for routines, getting upset when things change, or wanting to do things in the same way every time.
 - Sometimes, there are very strong interests in specific topics or objects, often to the point where little else seems important.
 - You or your child might react unusually to sensory experiences, such as being very sensitive to sounds, lights, textures, or smells, or not noticing pain or temperature as much as others do.
- **When do these signs show up?**
 - These signs are usually present early in life, even if they become more noticeable as social situations get harder or as demands increase over time.
- **Impact on daily life:**
 - The challenges and behaviours above might make it harder to do well at school, work, or in social situations.
- **Not just another condition:**
 - These signs are not better explained by a different condition, like an intellectual disability—but sometimes both can happen together.

If these challenges sound familiar and have been going on for a while, it may be worth talking with a teacher or psychologist about a formal evaluation.