

# Early Signs of Autism



## Pre-reading

Questions: What is autism? What are some early signs of autism?

Definitions: Peer – someone who is the equal of someone else (e.g. in age or social class)

Intervention – action taken on a situation in order to influence outcomes

Spectrum – a scale with a range of values, having opposites for limits on each end

## Reading

20 Sam is a toddler that is not developing at the same rate as his peers. At age two, his parents  
38 noticed that his language was delayed. He did not respond to his name when called. Sam also did  
53 not like interacting with other children or playing “peek-a-boo” with his parents. After his parents  
67 discussed their concerns with their pediatrician, they had Sam **assessed**. Once Sam was tested,  
73 they learned that he had Autism.

73 Autism is a brain disorder that affects the development of children starting at a young age.  
89 The causes of Autism are unknown and it is not easily detected until about age two or three. There  
108 are different degrees of Autism which are rated on a spectrum scale. A **mild** case is on one end of  
128 the spectrum and often referred to as Asperger’s Syndrome. Children with Aspergers are usually  
142 fairly high functioning and intelligent. Their disability is in the ability to relate to others. On the  
159 other end of the spectrum, **severe** cases of Autism can occur. Some of these cases include the  
176 inability to communicate entirely.

180 According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 150 children have Autism.  
195 It is thought to be on the rise, and it is three to four times more likely to occur in boys than in girls.  
219 Siblings of a child with Autism are also more at risk for having Autism. All races, social classes  
237 and ethnicities are affected by Autism. Because early intervention is so important, it is essential for  
253 parents to know the signs that may indicate the need to be screened by a doctor.

269 First Signs, Inc. ([www.firstsigns.org](http://www.firstsigns.org)) lists the following as early signs of Autism:

- 281 • Little or no eye contact
- 286 • Does not respond to name, acts deaf
- 293 • Language delay
- 295 • Does not meet developmental milestones (i.e. crawling, walking)
- 303 • Uses repetitive actions or words
- 308 • Displays hand flapping and/or toe walking
- 315 • Regression or loss of skills
- 320 • Demonstrates inappropriate play or behavior
- 325 • Prefers to be alone
- 329 • Over or under-reactive sensory input (i.e. touch, sound, taste, sight, hearing)
- 341 • Rocks or bangs head, likes spinning

347 If you have a child or you know a child that demonstrates some of these signs, and you are  
366 concerned that he or she might have Autism, talk to the child’s doctor. The sooner a child with  
384 Autism is diagnosed, the sooner he or she can start receiving special services and help that will lead  
402 to greater success for the child and family.

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## Understanding

1. Why were Sam’s parents concerned about his development? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What causes Autism? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Sam was “assessed” for Autism. What does **assess** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Define the words **mild** and **severe**. \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What are some signs of Autism? (List at least three.) \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. Why is early intervention important? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What should you do if you suspect your child has Autism? \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Write about a young child you know. Write about his development. How does she play?  
What are some of his behaviors? Does she display any signs Autism? If so, which ones?

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