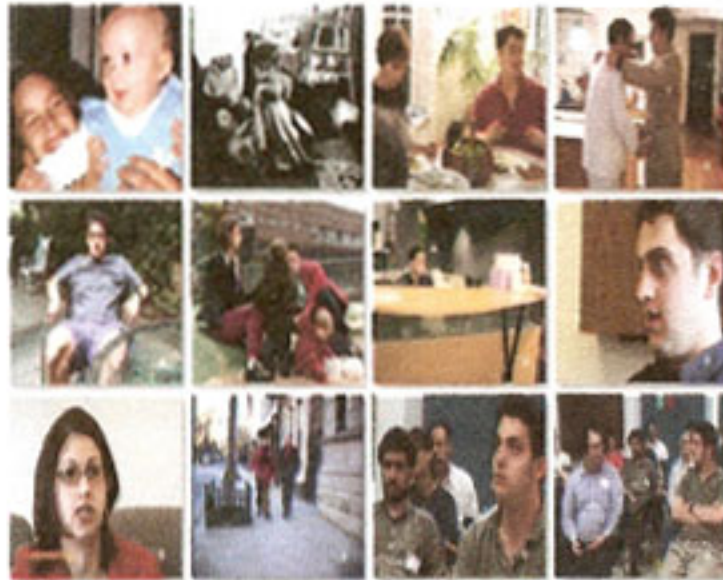




HEALTH EDUCATION LIBRARY FOR PEOPLE

Asperger Syndrome



**LET'S HELP
ERADICATE
IGNORANCE**

**Understanding Asperger
Syndrome**

Asperger Syndrome

Asperger syndrome is an autism spectrum disorder, a group of conditions that include autism and other disorders with similar symptoms, such as problems with language and communication, and repetitive or restrictive patterns of thoughts and behavior.



People with Asperger syndrome have autism-like problems in areas of social interaction and communication, but have normal intelligence and verbal skills. Asperger syndrome is usually thought to be the mildest of the autism spectrum disorders.

Symptoms

The most distinguishing symptom of AS is a child's obsessive interest in a single object or topic to the exclusion of any other. Children with AS want to know everything about their topic of interest and their conversations with others will be about little else. Their expertise, high level of vocabulary, and formal speech patterns make them seem like little professors.

- Obsessive or repetitive routines and rituals
- Motor-skill problems, such as clumsy or uncoordinated movements and delays in motor skills

- Social-skill problems, especially related to communicating with others
- Sensitivity to sensory information, such as light, sound, texture, and taste

Children with AS are isolated because of their poor social skills and narrow interests. They may approach other people, but make normal conversation impossible by inappropriate or eccentric behavior, or by wanting only to talk about their singular interest. Children with AS usually have a history of developmental delays in motor skills such as pedaling a bike, catching a ball, or climbing outdoor play equipment. They are often awkward and poorly coordinated with a walk that can appear either stilted or bouncy.

Diagnose



The comprehensive evaluation includes neurologic and genetic assessment, with in-depth cognitive and language testing to establish IQ and

evaluate psychomotor function, verbal and non-verbal strengths and weaknesses, style of learning, and independent living skills. An assessment of communication strengths and weaknesses includes evaluating non-verbal forms of communication (gaze and gestures); the use of non-literal language (metaphor, irony, absurdities, and humor); patterns of inflection, stress and volume modulation; pragmatics (turn-taking and sensitivity to verbal cues); and the content, clarity, and coherence of conversation. The physician will look at the testing results and combine them with the child's developmental

history and current symptoms to make a diagnosis.

Treatment



AS coordinates therapies that address the three core symptoms of the disorder: poor communication skills, obsessive or repetitive routines, and physical clumsiness. There is no single best treatment package for all children with AS, but most professionals agree that the earlier the intervention, the better.

An effective treatment program builds on the child's interests, offers a predictable schedule, teaches tasks as a series of simple steps, actively engages the child's attention in highly structured activities, and provides regular reinforcement of behavior. It may include social skills training, cognitive behavioral therapy, medication for co-existing conditions, and other measures.

Prognosis

With effective treatment, children with AS can learn to cope with their disabilities, but they may still find social situations and personal relationships challenging. Many adults with AS are able to work successfully in mainstream jobs, although they may continue to need encouragement and moral support to maintain an independent life.



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