

# What Is Autism?

Autism affects the brain and how a person senses the world around them, communicates, thinks, and understands. People with autism have unique brains. No two people with autism are the same, which means the examples we give will not apply to everyone.

The Autism Society of Minnesota created this resource with support from the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services Disability Services Division.

## How does someone with autism act?

People with autism may act differently from those around them. You'll see this in two main areas:

### How they talk, communicate, and socialize.

Examples:

- Needs a longer time to process
- Skips small talk or politeness
- Has a hard time making or keeping friends
- May not use spoken language, or speak in scripts



### Repeating thoughts or actions.

Examples:

- Flapping hands or rocking body
- Always does things in the same order
- Has a hard time with change
- Has an intense interest in a few specific topics



### You may also notice:

- Big reactions to sensory input like loud noises or bright lights.
- People with autism often have skills that develop unevenly: they can be very talented at one thing and struggle a lot with another.

# Facts About Autism



Autism is lifelong: someone who has autism is born with it and will always have it. However this does not mean that a person with autism can't thrive.

When people with autism get good support, they can live wonderful, fulfilled lives. That's why it's so important to have support throughout the whole lifespan.

Support will look different for each person, and the support someone needs may change over time.

Autism is not an illness or disease, so you can't spread it to other people. There is no evidence that shows autism is caused by vaccines, diet, or bad parenting. Autism is a disability. Autism affects people from different races, ethnic groups, backgrounds, religions, genders, places, and more. Anyone can have autism.

Autism is a disability because an autistic person's differences can make it hard to do or participate in things. Disabilities do not have to be physical.

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