# Autism Resource Guide

## Help for Parents and Families with Autistic Children

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*“To my family, for their undying support and love and especially*

*To my son Jacob.  Help us to see the world through your eyes.”*

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# Introduction

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading the book, *"Autism Resource Guide: Help for Parents and Families with Autistic Children"*. When my son, Jacob, was diagnosed with autism over 10 years ago, I was absolutely devastated. I didn't know anything about autism. I felt alone and adrift in uncharted waters. I want to share what we've learned over the years to help other families of autistic children.

Hearing that your child has autism can be quite devastating. Caring for a child with such a disorder brings about many difficulties and challenges, but life doesn't have to be hard and you don't have to be discouraged. You can help your child overcome his condition by developing skills that will allow him to have a better life.

This book contains proven steps and strategies on how to understand your child's situation and cope with it. You will find different strategies that you can employ to aid his treatments and different ways through which you can care for yourself while caring for your child. The book also outlines tips to encourage family members to become a vital part in the development of the child with autism.

Autism doesn't have to hold you back. You can lead a normal life and you can help your child be the best that he can be. There are various treatments available and you just need to find out the best approach for your child. Just remember that your child is unique. There is hope!

Thanks again for downloading this book, I hope you enjoy it!

# Chapter 1 - Understanding the Basics of Autism

*"Autism does exist on a spectrum, and there are so many manifestations of it, so many kinds of expressions of it. And every case is particular."*

- *Anonymous*

Autism is a neurobehavioral disorder. It is a composite malady that impairs language and communication skills and social interaction. Patients diagnosed with autism will have severe inflexible and repetitive behaviors.

Autism involves a huge spectrum and levels of skill impairments and symptoms. It is a severe handicap, which limits a person from enjoying a normal life.

For instance, children who suffer from autism will find it difficult to communicate. They will have a hard time understanding what other people feel or think as well as expressing their own feelings and thoughts. They won't have full control over their facial expressions, their sense of touch and their gestures. You should also know that children with autism suffer from increased sensitivity and they may encounter pain or discomfort by even the slightest sounds, smells or touches.

The following are some common symptoms that autistic children may experience:

- Repetitive, categorized body movements including pacing, rocking or hand flapping
- Resistance to modifications in routines
- Unusual attachment or fondness of particular objects
- Aggressive behavior
- Cognitive impairment
- Uneven skill development

You will notice that autistic children sometimes seem as if they live in their own world, not taking notice of what is happening in their surroundings. Some children with autism show self-injurious behaviors. Also the possibility exists of developing seizures later in life typically when they reach adolescence.

While most autistic children have delays in many areas of cognitive development, most especially with social interaction, they may excel in other skills such as memorizing facts, drawing and solving math problems. Autistic children may even score higher on non-verbal intelligence examinations.

Some children show symptoms of autism from birth, but it is usually recognizable by the time the child reaches 3 years of age. Some children do not show any obvious signs of developmental delay initially. Most often developmental delays become apparent when the child reaches 1 ½ to 3 years of age. It may be difficult to notice signs of ineptness with social interaction and communication skills until the child's environment becomes more complex and demands more of him.

Autism is not limited by any boundaries: gender, racial or social. Your family's lifestyle, income or educational attainments don't influence the occurrence of autism. However, statistically it is more common in boys than girls with 4 times more boys being affected by autism than girls. In the past few decades, the number of individuals diagnosed with autisms has increased. This may be due to more effective diagnosis.

Autism spectrum disorder is the single category when it comes to diagnosing autism. It includes the following syndromes:

1. Autistic Disorder – The syndrome suffered by most children under three years of age characterized by having difficulty with communication, imagination and social interaction skills.

2. Asperger's Syndrome – Children suffering from this disorder may have good communication and language skills but have limited social interaction skills and interests.
3. Rett Syndrome – This type of autism usually becomes apparent a few years later, evidenced by impaired cognitive development. Children with Rett Syndrome may develop normally in the beginning but eventually show developmental delays in social and verbal skills.
4. Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) – This is also called atypical autism. Children who display autistic behaviors but don't fit into the other categories are often diagnosed with PDD.

*Causes of Autism*

There is no clear explanation why autism occurs. Research states that this condition comes from having abnormalities in the brain that affect sensory input and language processing. Certain gene combinations may also cause autism and the condition can run in families. There are also certain risk factors that affect the chances of having autistic children:

- Advanced age of either father or mother
- Exposure to drugs or chemicals during pregnancy
- Use of alcohol during pregnancy
- Maternal metabolic conditions like obesity and diabetes
- Use of anti-seizure medication before and during pregnancy
- Presence of Rubella or German measles virus
- Untreated phenylketonuria

There has been some controversy that the MMR (mumps measles rubella) vaccination is responsible for autism developing in otherwise healthy children. You may also see other citations regarding vaccinations in general, attributing vaccinations to cause autism;

however, there is no evidence to prove such claims. The MMR vaccination is first administered in the time frame (12-15 months) where many families first begin to notice developmental delays.

Additionally, there is little proof that the quality of a child's psychological surroundings can trigger autism.

It can be quite challenging to care for a child with autism. In the next chapters, you will learn how to meet an autistic child's needs and cope with this condition.

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My sincere thanks and all the best!

Kim Beinke