

Autistic spectrum condition (ASC)

ASC is a lifelong developmental condition, impacting upon areas of communication, social interaction and behaviour. The word spectrum is used because, although those with ASC share similar difficulties, they may be affected in different ways.



- Recent studies indicate that 1.1% or 695,000 people in the UK may have an ASC (www.autism.org.uk)
- The ratio of boys to girls diagnosed with ASC is around 3:1

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TOP TIPS

- People with ASC often need extra time to process information, questions and instructions. Any language used should be short and uncomplicated.
- People with ASC may feel intense anxiety in social situations and some may try and avoid it altogether; being given time and space is beneficial.
- People with ASC can feel worried about unexpected changes such as delays and cancellations and may benefit from being pre-warned of these.
- All of these issues can lead to someone becoming overwhelmed and having a 'meltdown' or 'shutdown'. This can be physically and emotionally debilitating. Moving to a quieter, less busy environment may help at these times.

More information

- Be aware that many children and young people with ASC can find noise, smells and bright lights painful, overwhelming and distressing, reducing noise levels or moving to a less busy environment can help at these times.
- Many young people with ASC are visual learners and they can find listening and processing words challenging. Using visual prompts to support activities and communication, for example timetables, may help reduce levels of stress and anxiety.
- Some people with ASC can take what is said very literally. For example “*wait a minute*” could literally be interpreted as “*wait for exactly one minute*”. Avoid saying things that are not clear or using phrases that may have another meaning.
- Sometimes people with ASC may have difficulty reading non-verbal information such as facial expression and tone of voice and may struggle to get their social communication ‘right’. They are not being rude or awkward but may genuinely not have picked up on these social clues.
- Some people with ASC may not like making eye contact, which may cause a lot of worry and anxiety. Avoid making demands such as “look at me” as this could cause unnecessary stress.

The exact cause of ASC is still being investigated. Research into the causes suggests that a combination of factors, both genetic and environmental, may account for differences in development.

ASC is not caused by a person's upbringing or their social circumstances and is not the fault of the individual with the condition. ASC is not caused by vaccinations.

