

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (also shortly called autism) refers to a group of complex neurodevelopmental disorders. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. They include autistic disorder, Asperger syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), Rett syndrome, and childhood disintegrative disorder. ASD can be associated with intellectual disability, difficulties in motor coordination and attention and physical health issues such as sleep and gastrointestinal disturbances. Some persons with ASD excel in visual skills, music, math and art.

Autism appears to have its roots in abnormalities of very early brain development. However, the most obvious signs of autism and symptoms of autism tend to emerge between 2 and 3 years of age.

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/what-autism>