

# A utism is...



***A part of our world  
Not a world apart.***

## Autism Society of British Columbia is:

- a non-profit, charitable organization
- a provincial resource
- a chapter of Autism Society Canada

## Our Mission is:

To promote understanding, acceptance and full community inclusion for people with autism in British Columbia while providing support for the realization of the rights and informed choices of individuals with autism and their families.

## We support families by providing:

- Parent Training
- Parent Support Groups
- Parent Support Network
- Crisis Support and Referral
- Summer Reimbursement Program
- Newsletter
- Resource Library
- Information
- Online Discussion Forum
- Training Videos
- Workshops and Seminars
- Branches in Nanaimo & Prince George

## Autism Society of British Columbia

#301-3701 E. Hastings  
Burnaby, BC V5C 2H6

## Autism Society of BC is funded by

- Ministry for Children & Families
- Membership
- Donors like you!

## AUTISM SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

#301 – 3701 EAST HASTINGS STREET  
BURNABY, B.C. V5C 2H6

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/Prov.: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

For office use:  
 Date Received \_\_\_\_\_

Card & Receipt Issued \_\_\_\_\_

Q & A \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a ‘pervasive development disorder’ (PDD). Other disorders in the PDD family include Asperger’s syndrome, Rett’s syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorders and PDD-NOS (pervasive developmental disorder – not otherwise specified). Autism is a disability which affects the way people are able to interpret what they see, hear and feel. People with autism have difficulty forming relationships and communication wants and needs.

- Infants with autism may show delays from birth or may seem to develop typically for the first two years before symptoms show.
- There is a wide “spectrum” of autism because the number and severity of symptoms a person has varies.
- About 1 in 1,000 children are born with autism. The number born within the PDD category, as a group, is about 1 in 500.
- Out of every 5 people born with autism, 4 are boys and 1 is a girl.
- Autism is found all around the world and affects babies born to parents from all racial, ethnic, social & economic backgrounds.

## HOW IS AUTISM DIAGNOSED?

There is no medical test for autism. Pediatricians, child psychiatrists or psychologists with experience in autism diagnose it by observing the child’s behaviour and asking parents about the child’s development. Ideally, an assessment for this complex condition should be done by a team of professionals, - a speech pathologist, development pediatrician, and psychologist or psychiatrist.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF AUTISM

People with autism will have some of the characteristics from each of the categories below.

### 1. Communication impairment

- Speech is absent or delayed: poor use & understanding of gestures; difficulty with abstract concepts; may say “you” instead of “I” – *reverses pronouns*
- Language is unusual and repetitive: focus on one topic – *preservation*; repetition of what others say – *echolalia*; made up words
- Conversations are difficult for them to initiate and/or sustain

### 2. Delays in Social Interaction

- Social cues such as eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures are difficult for them to use and understand
- Relationships with peers don’t develop or maintain; may appear to prefer to be alone
- Sharing enjoyment or interests with others by showing or pointing out things is absent or delayed
- Appreciation of other people’s point of view may be absent

### 3. Atypical Behaviours

- One or just a few interests or activities may be repeated over and over; may do activity repetitively or may talk about one topic in a *preoccupied way*
- Routines or rituals may be rigidly followed: changes in routines or surroundings may cause distress
- Flapping hands, rocking, spinning, and other body movements may be repeated – *stereotypic* or self *stimulatory behaviour*

- Attachment or preoccupation with objects or parts of objects

### 4. Early Onset – by age 3

### 5. Related Characteristics

- Certain sights, tastes, smells, touch or sounds may cause an exaggerated reaction: upset by certain sounds, foods, or being touched; fascinated with lights
- May appear to be deaf when spoken to, yet hear some sounds at other times
- Injuries, extreme cold or heat may cause little or no reaction
- Temper tantrums may occur without warning
- May eat only a few foods
- May sleep very little
- Dangerous situations may not cause fear
- Selfinjurious behaviours may be present

## WHAT CAUSES AUTISM?

The causes of autism are still unknown. It is known that autism is NOT caused by the parents or the way a child is raised. There is likely a physical cause which affects the development of parts of the brain. Causes may include genetics, viruses, poor immune system, problems during pregnancy & birth, chromosome abnormalities and pollutants.

## IS THERE A CURE FOR AUTISM?

Although there is no known cure for autism, research indicates the best treatment is intensive early intervention. A strong focus on increasing communication skills and individualized education with peer models, gives people with autism an opportunity to grow to their fullest potential and be valued members of society.