

Autism: Unique Characteristics and Recognizing Early Signs

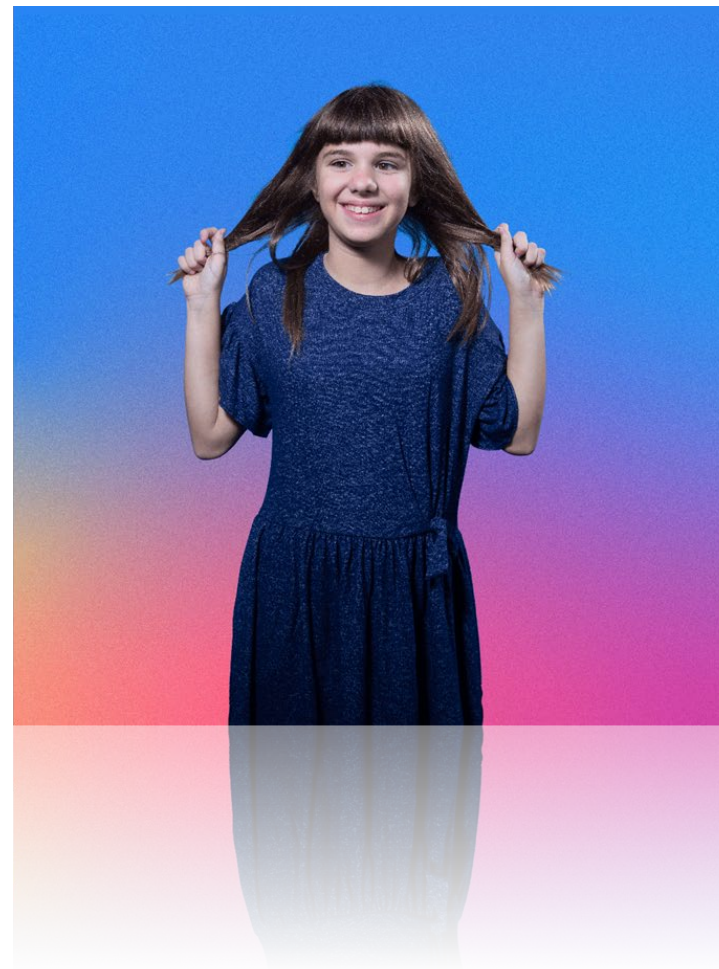
**Dr. Andrew Nelson
Director, Autism
Response Team**

***2021 World Autism Awareness Day
Interagency Roundtable***

What is Autism?

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder

- **Refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors and nonverbal communication.**
- **There is not one autism, but many subtypes**
- **Caused by a combination of genetic and environmental influences.**



A person with autism may...



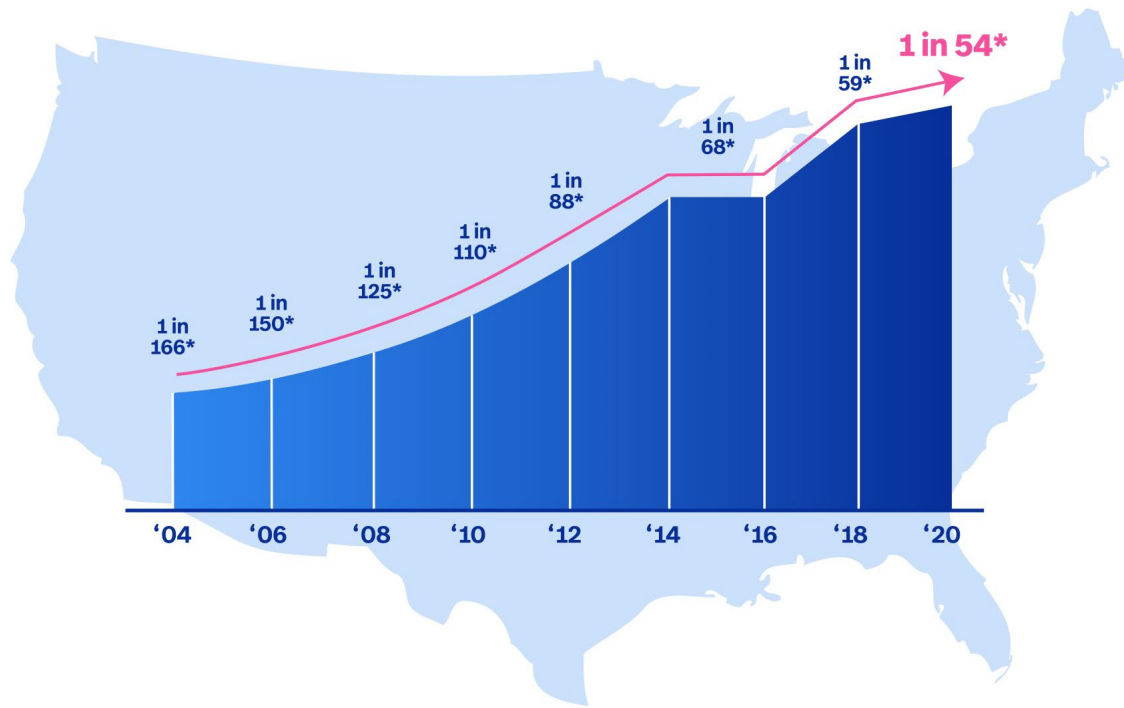
- **Not respond to their name**
- **Avoid eye contact**
- **Have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings**
- **Communication challenges**
- **Repeat words or phrases**
- **Become upset by changes in routine**
- **Have intense interests**
- **Repetitive Behavior – a 'stim' can be flapping hands, rock their body, spin in circles, etc.**
- **Have intense reactions to sensory input: sounds, smells, taste, seeing or feel**

A person with autism may...



- **Have increased need for safety resources**
- **Attend to details**
- **Be highly skilled in a particular area**
- **Have deeply focused interests**
- **Employ logical decision-making**
- **Use high levels of visual processing**
- **Be loyal**
- **Listen without judgement**
- **Be direct and honest**

How prevalent is autism?



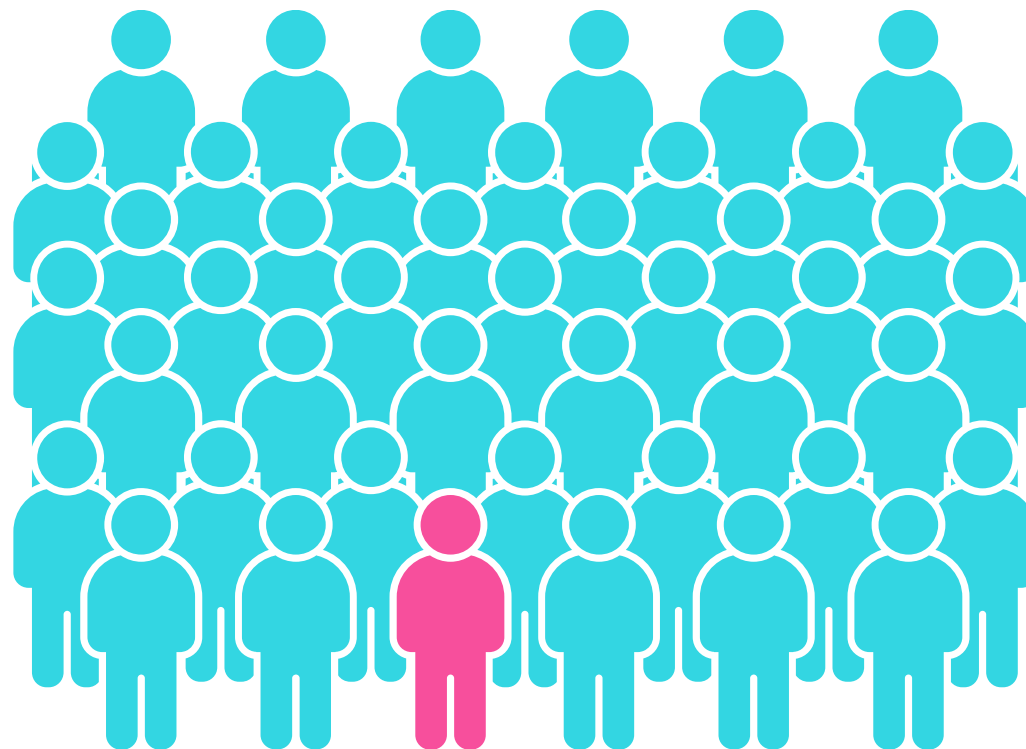
* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) prevalence estimates are for 4 years prior to the report date (e.g. 2020 figures are from 2016)

Autism affects an estimated 1 in 54 children and 1 in 45 adults in the U.S.

Autism is more prevalent among boys with 1 in 34 diagnosed; as compared to 1 in 144 girls

The United Nations estimates that 70 million people are affected worldwide

Autism affects
1 in 45 or
2.2%
adults in the U.S.



Source: Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders 2020

Findings estimate autism affects 1 in 45, or 2.21 percent, of U.S. adults.

On May 10, 2020, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published the first study to estimate the prevalence of autism in U.S. adults age 18 and older.

Study Highlights:

- Autism prevalence in adults varied by region
- Prevalence is higher in men (3.6%) than women (0.86%)
- Many people are not diagnosed until later in life, although autism can be reliably diagnosed around 15 months of age

The Autism Response Team (ART)

10 ways ART can help

- When you don't know where to start...
- Find local services
- Learn the signs
- Find the right tools
- Newly diagnosed resources
- Knowing your rights
- Staying informed
- Parent Support
- Transition to adulthood
- Adult Services



We're here to help.
(888) AUTISM2 En Español (888) 772-9050
help@autismspeaks.org

10 Ways the Autism Response Team Can Help

1. When you don't know where to start:

The Autism Response Team (ART) is specially trained to connect people with autism, their families and caregivers, as well as professionals, to information, tools and resources. Call, email or chat online at autismspeaks.org.

2. Find local services:

Do you need help finding local autism service providers in your area? ART can help you access the Autism Speaks Resource Guide, our online national database of service providers and resources searchable by state and zip code.

3. Learn the signs:

Are you concerned your child has a developmental delay? Trust your instincts and contact ART to learn how to connect with local *Early Intervention* resources. Early intervention services can make extraordinary differences in your child's development.

4. Find the right tools:

Contact ART to learn more about our Tool Kits! Autism Speaks Tool Kits provide information, timelines, strategies, and more on many topics relevant to the autism community. Examples include the *Challenging Behaviors Tool Kit*, *School Community Tool Kit*, *Special Needs Financial Planning Tool Kit* and more! Visit autismspeaks.org/tool-kit.

5. Newly diagnosed children:

Learn how to make the best use of the first 100 days after receiving a diagnosis! Families who have a child that has been diagnosed with ASD in the last 6 months can call ART to request a complimentary copy of our *100 Day Kit for Young Children* or for *School Age Children*.

6. Know your child's rights:

Looking for more information on your child's educational rights? Contact ART to learn more about the rights and entitlements of children and adults with autism. Resources are also available to help you prepare for your child's IEP meeting.

7. Stay informed:

ART can help you locate a wide variety of autism-related resources on our website. Resources are searchable by age group and topic, and cover everything from the first developmental concern to employment in later adulthood.

8. Parent support:

Sometimes managing the day-to-day challenges of living with autism is overwhelming and can be isolating! Today, it is estimated that 1 in 54 children is diagnosed with autism in the United States. Contact ART for help connecting with other families affected by autism.

9. Transition to adulthood:

Wondering how to start planning for your child's future? Contact ART to learn about our Transition Tool Kit and other resources to explore as you and your child with autism begin to plan for adulthood.

10. Adult services:

Connecting adults with autism to support services, resources and information is a priority for Autism Speaks. Contact ART for more information on local resources for adults with autism, including employment and housing information.

COVID-19 Resources



**COVID-19 (coronavirus)
information and
resources**

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/covid-19-information-and-resources>



We're Here to Help!

The Autism Response Team (ART) is an information line for the autism community. Our team members are specially trained to provide personalized information and resources to people with autism and their families.

How to contact ART

Call our toll-free number or send us an email – we're available between 9am and 5pm in all time zones. Live chat is also available between 9am and 5pm ET.

Your call will be routed to the team member for your region. We also have a dedicated Spanish language toll-free number.

1-888-AUTISM2 (1-888-288-4762)

En Español: 1-888-772-9050

help@autismspeaks.org

