

# Autism – do you know the signs?

## Children and Younger Adolescents

### Social Interaction and Verbal Communication

Repeating certain words or phrases over and over again ("echolalia")

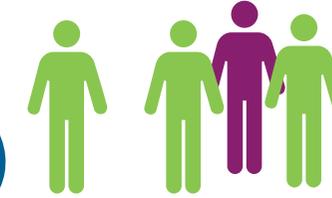
**"echolalia  
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echolalia"**

Does not follow simple commands relating to objects not in view (such as fetch your toothbrush)

Talks excessively about topics of own interest

Takes things literally, struggles with sarcasm and metaphor

Limited use of language



Does not respond by looking when name is called. Talks 'at' others rather than sharing a two-way conversation

Does not seek comfort when in pain or distress

Indifferent to, or no interest in, age peers

Unaware of other's feelings

Problems with turn-taking or team activities

Does not offer comfort to others

Approaches others in one sided way or on own terms

Finds making and keeping friendships difficult

Does not spontaneously join in or interact with others of same age

Can be over-formal or over-familiar



Does not enjoy social situations that most children like (e.g. birthday parties)

Does not respond to greetings and farewells

Emotional responses to others are inappropriate, rude and unsympathetic

Does not 'share' interests or enjoyment with others

### Imagination, ideas and creativity

Lack of imaginative pretend play (pretending that dolls and toys are real and enacting out scenarios with them or role play)



Imaginative pretend play or role play is repetitive

Imaginative pretend play is over-focused or obsessive or copied (not invented)



Struggles to predict reactions of others

Imaginative pretend play is solitary or plays near but not with other children

Empathy reduced or absent

Plays imaginative pretend play with others but not equally shared - may passively copy another's imaginative game, or insist that others follows his/her own themes and rules

### Gestures and non verbal communication



Does not 'show' objects by holding them up or giving them to someone



Does not follow a pointing gesture to where someone is looking

Lack of pointing to show objects and share interest

Lack of spontaneous gesture that expresses emotion (e.g. putting arm around someone)

Poorly integrated gestures, facial expression, proximity, body language or eye contact when having conversations



Reduced or unusual eye contact

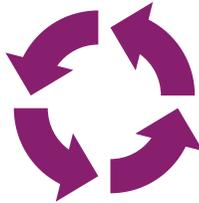


Lack of social smile

Odd or flat/monotonous tone of voice

### Narrow range of interests, routines and repetitive behaviours

Displays repetitive behaviours or rituals that negatively affect daily activities



Arranges objects in patterns or lines and dislikes these to be disturbed

Insists on following own agenda

Over-focused, unusual or highly specific interests and hobbies

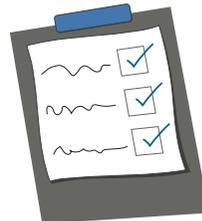
Repetitive 'stereotypical' movements such as hand flapping, body rocking while standing, spinning, finger flicking

Self-chosen activities are limited and unchanging

Prefers familiar routines, likes things to be 'just right'

Has strong adherence to rules or fairness that leads to arguments

Dislike of change, which can lead to anxiety or aggression



### Sensory responses

Unusual sensory responses to sound sight, touch, taste, smell, movement and/or pain

