

where to begin

THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. You're not alone. We're parents just like you. We understand the heartache, confusion, fear, anger, and the million other emotions that accompany an autism diagnosis.
2. Progress is on your side. No matter how severe the degree of autism may be, our children do progress. More and more, children are even recovering from autism. Although certain subsets of children are more prone to recovery than others, early intervention, therapies and treatments greatly improve the symptoms of autism.
3. Hope will always be there. Times may become difficult, even unbearable, but you will always have support among fellow parents, and you will always have hope. Breakthroughs have already been made – some big, some small. Research will continue to help us have even more breakthroughs.

HELPFUL FIRST STEPS:

- Join a local support group or local discussion forum.
- Join a national discussion forum. There are many to choose from. For a list of groups, visit:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/search?query=autism>
- Find a DAN (Defeat Autism Now) doctor in your area. For a listing, visit: www.autism.com/dan/index.htm
- Check with your child's primary care provider for referrals to private therapists such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists, ABA specialists, etc.
- Find a local mentor or advocate that can help you through the process of your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), and is knowledgeable about autism interventions and local resources.

note: check with a DAN doctor, or your child's primary care physician before initiating any biomedical intervention.



visit www.nationalautism.org

autism & safety

Autism sometimes presents a unique set of safety concerns for parents. Regardless of whether or not your child may be prone to wandering, it's always good to familiarize yourself with ways to keep your child safe.

ALERT YOUR NEIGHBORS:

The behaviors and characteristics of autism have the potential to attract attention from the public. Law enforcement professionals suggest that you reach out and get to know your neighbors.

- *Plan a brief visit to your neighbors*
- *Introduce your child or adult or provide a photograph*
- *Give your neighbor a simple handout with your name, address, and phone number. Ask them to call you immediately if they see your son or daughter outside the home.*

PROVIDE LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO SWIM

Too often children with autism who wander are attracted to water. Be sure your child knows how to swim unassisted. Swimming lessons for children with special needs are available at many YMCA locations. The final lesson should be with clothes on.

GET AN ID BRACELET FOR YOUR CHILD

Include your name and telephone number. State that your child has autism and is non-verbal if applicable.

CONSIDER A PERSONAL TRACKING DEVICE

projectlifesaver.org; ion-kids.com; geminitracking.com; caretrak.com

SECURE YOUR HOME

- *Install secure deadbolt locks that require keys on both sides*
- *Install a home security alarm system*
- *Install inexpensive battery-operated alarms on doors and windows. These are available at stores like WalMart and Radio Shack.*
- *Place hook and eye locks on all doors, above your child's reach*
- *Fence your yard*



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a guide for families new to the autism diagnosis

at times, hope
may seem lost

but there will
always be

fellow
parents

to help you
find it.



ABOUT *autism*

:: Autism is a bio-neurological developmental disability that generally appears before the age of 3.

:: Autism impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills, and cognitive function. Individuals with autism typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

:: Individuals with autism often suffer from numerous physical ailments which may include: allergies, asthma, epilepsy, digestive disorders, persistent viral infections, feeding disorders, sensory integration dysfunction, sleeping disorders, and more.

:: Autism is diagnosed four times more often in boys than girls. Its prevalence is not affected by race, region, or socio-economic status. Since autism was first diagnosed in the U.S., the occurrence has climbed to an alarming one in 150 people across the country.

:: Autism does not affect life expectancy. With early intervention and treatment, the diverse symptoms related to autism can be greatly improved.

HOW IS AUTISM DIAGNOSED?

Autism is diagnosed based on clinical observation and testing by a professional using one or more standardized tests. Professionals most likely to diagnose autism are psychologists, psychiatrists, developmental pediatricians, and school psychologists.



visit www.nationalautism.org

WHAT CAUSES AUTISM?

You will hear many theories about what causes autism. To date, no one has found the exact cause of autism.

In the early 1950's-1970's it was thought that the mothers of children with autism were neglecting and not loving their children which in turn caused them to regress into a world of their own. These mothers were labeled "Refrigerator Mothers." Thanks to Dr. Bernard Rimland, we've come a long way since then.

It's important to do your own research into the various causes that are being investigated. We believe that families should have access to all information including environmental insults, vaccines, genetics, etc. Please visit our research library at nationalautism.org for a list of relevant scientific studies.

AUTISM AND GENETICS:

According to officials at the National Institutes of Health, while there is most likely a genetic predisposition, there must also be an environmental component to autism.

The rapid rise in the rate of autism over the last 15 years cannot be attributed solely to genetics.

Autism is no longer considered a heritable, genetic disorder. It is an environmentally-triggered, therefore preventable and treatable disease. Environmental research holds the key to finding the cause and developing effective treatments for those affected.

helpful *books*

Louder than Words, Jenny McCarthy
Children With Starving Brains, Dr. Jaquelyn McCandless
Evidence of Harm, David Kirby
Changing the Course of Autism, Dr. Bryan Jepson
Unraveling the Mystery of Autism, Karyn Seroussi
Facing Autism, Lynn Hamilton
The Out-of-Sync-Child, Carol Stock Kranowitz
Married With Special Needs Children, Marshak/Prezant

WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

When families and caregivers begin looking into the various treatment options available for autism spectrum disorders, they will be surprised to find that there are many options out there. Unfortunately, what works for some families, may not work for others. Since individuals with autism are not exactly the same, treatment plans need to be made specific for each individual.

VARIOUS TREATMENT OPTIONS

Early Intervention
Chelation Therapy
Behavior Modification
Dietary Intervention
Vitamins and Supplements
Sensory Integration Dysfunction
Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy
Speech Therapy
Music Therapy
Vision Therapy
Canine Companions
Relationship Development Intervention (RDI)
Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

For more information about these therapies, please visit our web site at www.nationalautism.org. The National Autism Association does not endorse individual programs, therapies, treatments, schools or facilities, or the theories or practices of any one individual.

ABOUT *us*

The National Autism Association is a parent-led non-profit organization that educates and empowers families affected by autism.

We also educate society that autism is not a lifelong incurable genetic disorder but one that is biomedically definable and treatable. For more information, visit our web site at www.nationalautism.com