



Autism in girls and boys



What is Autism?

- ▶ Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects communication skills, social interactions, forming relationships and behaviour.
- ▶ <https://youtu.be/DZXjJVrm1Jw> (10 things you should know)
- ▶ overwhelming need for routine
- ▶ the presence of repetitive and restrictive behaviours
- ▶ issues processing sensory input
- ▶ https://youtu.be/DgDR_gYk_a8 (Virtual reality experience)



Signs of autism in children

Autism in young children

- ▶ not responding to their name
- ▶ avoiding eye contact
- ▶ not smiling when you smile at them
- ▶ getting very upset if they do not like a certain taste, smell or sound
- ▶ repetitive movements, such as flapping their hands, flicking their fingers or rocking their body
- ▶ not talking as much as other children
- ▶ not doing as much pretend play
- ▶ repeating the same phrases



Autism in older children

- ▶ not seeming to understand what others are thinking or feeling
- ▶ unusual speech, such as repeating phrases and talking 'at' others
- ▶ liking a strict daily routine and getting very upset if it changes
- ▶ having a very keen interest in certain subjects or activities
- ▶ getting very upset if you ask them to do something
- ▶ finding it hard to make friends or preferring to be on their own
- ▶ taking things very literally – for example, they may not understand phrases like "break a leg"
- ▶ finding it hard to say how they feel





There is no one way to be autistic

- ▶ It's already a complex condition but it presents differently in boys and girls too, which is why understanding these differences is crucial for caregivers so they can offer the right support.
- ▶ <https://youtu.be/otAcbF-fESI> (There is no one way to be autistic)



Putting on the mask – autism in girls

- ▶ Research suggests the main reason that girls stay undetected and therefore are underrepresented in autism statistics, is because they're more capable of imitating their peers and mimicking social norms to fit in. This is called masking, and it takes a big toll on mental and physical health. Unfortunately, this survival mechanism means they often evade treatment and support, leading to further problems in adolescence and adulthood.
- ▶ Girls with autism tend to have better social communication skills than boys, making it harder to detect the condition in females. As girls are more likely to mask their difficulties in social situations, they're able to blend in better with their peers.
- ▶ For example, girls with autism may learn how to make eye contact during conversation, even though they may not understand its social significance, or they might use rehearsed scripts and responses to get by in social situations.

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- However, while autistic girls may have difficulty initiating and maintaining friendships, they tend to have more of a desire to be socially involved. However, despite being more motivated to engage socially, they can still struggle with the nuances of social cues such as sarcasm, facial expressions or reading when people are being untruthful. This vulnerability can sadly lead to them being taken advantage of by classmates and family members
 - https://youtu.be/4Xtog_zRRJg (A teenage girl)

Other signs of autism in girls and boys

➤ Signs of autism in girls

- More likely to mask in order to fit into social settings. Boys can do this too but it's less common.
- More likely to be able to respond to non-verbal communication cues.
- More likely to have challenging or disruptive behaviour to gain attention.
- More likely to have perseverative interests that appear socially 'typical', like music.
- More likely to be passive and withdrawn.

➤ Signs of autism in boys

- Boys with autism tend to have more noticeable deficits in social interaction and communication, such as difficulty initiating and maintaining conversations, lack of eye contact, and limited interest in socialising with others.
- More likely to have repetitive and restricted play behaviours.
- More likely to struggle with social communication in early life.
- More likely to have challenging or disruptive behaviour to obtain items.
- More likely to have perseverative interests in things like statistics and schedules.
- More likely to be hyperactive or prone to distraction.



Repetitive behaviour

- ▶ Boys with autism tend to display more stereotypical and overt repetitive behaviours, such as flapping their hands or spinning objects. In contrast, autistic girls may exhibit more subtle repetitive behaviours. This could be picking at their skin, obsessively organising objects, engaging in more repetitive self-talk or perseverative thinking, and repeating certain words or phrases in their head. To the outside world, these aren't immediately noticeable. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/fgc8p2mDIJU?feature=share> (Stimming) https://www.youtube.com/shorts/iJOB1Lu7M_s?feature=share
- ▶ Another reason why autistic girls often fly under the radar is because they're more able to suppress their repetitive behaviours. For example, girls are more likely to engage in repetitive behaviours in private, such as when they're alone in their room, rather than in public settings where others might observe them. This may make it more difficult for parents or caregivers to recognise the presence and frequency of these behaviours.
- ▶ Girls with ASC may be more aware of social expectations and norms than boys, which can cause them to suppress or modify their repetitive behaviours in order to fit in with their peers. An autistic girl who engages in hand flapping may be more likely to suppress this behaviour in public than a boy who displays the same behaviour.



- ▶ **What is autism?**
- ▶ Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. More than one in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.
- ▶ **Ever-changing definition**
- ▶ The definition of autism has changed over the decades and could change in future years as we understand more. Some people feel the spectrum is too broad, arguing an autistic person with 24/7 support needs cannot be compared with a person who finds supermarket lights too bright. We often find that autistic people and their families with different support needs share many of the same challenges, whether that's getting enough support from mental health, education and social care services or being misunderstood by people close to them.

Amazing People

➤ c (Susan B)



Susan Boyle

In April 2009, Susan Boyle, a middle-aged church volunteer from a small town in Scotland, auditioned for *Britain's Got Talent* with her favourite song "I Dreamed a Dream"—and more than 200 million video views later, she had captured the attention of the world for her soaring vocals and humble personality. Though she didn't win, Boyle went on to release seven albums, including 2009's *I Dreamed A Dream*, which became the fastest-selling U.K. debut of all time and skyrocketed to the top of the Billboard charts. The rise to fame came as a surprise to Boyle, who was born in 1961 and was often bullied as a child. It wasn't until she turned 51 that she was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, which is a form of autism. Boyle has gone on to headline her own international singing tour, appear in everything from a musical based on her own life to *Zoolander 2*, and has even performed for the Queen.



Amazing things Happen

➤ <https://youtu.be/Ezv85LMFx2E>

