



**HERITAGE**  
Lower Saint Lawrence  
Bas-Saint-Laurent

free  
No. 18

# Think

# Healthy!

Your Family's Health Newsletter

130 Principale  
Métis-sur-Mer  
1-855-936-3239

*Français au verso*

## Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition with persistent deficits in social communication and interactions across multiple settings and situations.

### Signs of ASD

Other signs include a tendency toward repetitive behaviours, and a restricted repertoire of activities and interests. Symptoms can occur in combinations and in degrees of intensity that vary in each individual affected.

People affected often exhibit early signs by 12 - 24 months. Because signs become noticeable in early childhood, parents are often the first to notice signs of the condition. A child may demonstrate only a few of these signs:

- avoids making eye contact
- does not "point and look"
- trouble making meaningful gestures by 1 year
- may appear hearing impaired; responds unevenly or not at all to sounds
- does not respond to their name
- begins to develop language then loses it, or doesn't acquire language at all
- cannot speak one word by 16 months
- cannot combine two words by 2 years
- exhibits failure to bond (e.g. child is indifferent to parents' presence)
- not interested in playing or interacting with other children or adults
- does not smile
- engages in limited imaginative play
- has problems with, or is not interested in playing with toys
- not easily consoled during transitions (tantrums)
- strongly resists changes in routines
- has difficulty sleeping/wakes at night
- chronic gastrointestinal problems
- self-restricted/selected diet



**CHSSN**

Community Health  
And Social Services Network  
Réseau communautaire de santé  
et de services sociaux

THINK HEALTHY! is a bilingual health and social well-being newsletter published by Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence. It is distributed in the Lower Saint Lawrence, Baie-des-Chaleurs, Gaspésie, North Shore and the Lower North Shore regions. THINK HEALTHY! is made possible through funding by Health Canada for the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), via its Health Promotion Project (HPP). For information, contact Marie-Claude Giroux at 1 855 936-3239 ext 223 or mcgiroux@heritagelsl.ca.

## Diagnosis and treatment of ASD

Many children benefit from early diagnosis and intervention. Timely screening and diagnosis can result in interventions and therapies that may improve a child's development and daily functioning skills.

A health professional or team of professionals will use various standardized tests to make an ASD diagnosis. Typically, a child will be screened for any developmental delays by their medical practitioner and then referred on where concerns are identified. If you see signs of ASD in a family member, talk to your health care provider.

For further information on seeking a diagnosis please see your health care provider.

**“Recent U.S. figures, based on 2010 data, estimate that approximately 1 in 68 eight year old children have been identified with ASD”.**

## Reduce your risk

While research continues on prevention and causes of ASD, early diagnosis and intervention can benefit children. If you see signs of ASD in a family member, talk to your health care provider.

If a family member is diagnosed with ASD, learning about the condition can help you prepare for, and cope with the challenges ahead.

- Get information from reliable sources. Many autism organizations have websites with information for parents and caregivers.
- Seek support and advice from other families dealing with ASD.
- Talk to your health care provider about support groups in your community.



source: [canadiensensante.gc.ca](http://canadiensensante.gc.ca)

## Where to get help



**Autism Canada**  
Advocate for and support Canadians with Autism and their families.

1-866-476-8440  
[www.autismcanada.org](http://www.autismcanada.org)



**Autism Speaks Canada**  
We are dedicated to funding global research into the causes, prevention, treatments, and cure for autism;

1-888-382-6227  
[www.autismspeaks.ca](http://www.autismspeaks.ca)



**HERITAGE**  
Lower Saint Lawrence  
Bas-Saint-Laurent

Available in our bilingual library :

**Since We're Friends**  
-Cleste Shally



There are two friends one has autism, the other does not. When Matt gets upset at the pool because it is unexpectedly closed or when the neighborhood kids leave him out of their games, his friend knows exactly how to make Matt feel accepted and happy.

**Yoga therapy for children with autism and special needs**

-Louise Goldberg

Behavior and focus, strength, flexibility, balance, and self-regulation are all improved through yoga, making it an ideal practice for children on the autism spectrum, with ADHD, sensory processing and emotional/behavioral disorders, and other exceptionalities.



More titles for all ages on this theme are available at the library.

For info: 1 855 936-3239

## We are all unique

Each person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is unique and will have different abilities. Symptoms caused by ASDs might be very mild in one person and quite severe in another.

Individuals with severe autism conditions may have serious cognitive disability, sensory problems and symptoms of extremely repetitive and unusual behaviours. This can include tantrums, self-injury, defensiveness and aggression. Without appropriate intervention, these symptoms may be very persistent and difficult to change. Living or working with a person with severe autism can be very challenging, requiring tremendous patience and understanding of the condition.

Individuals with mild autism conditions, however, may seem more like they have personality differences making it challenging to form relationships.

The primary symptoms of autism include problems with communication and social interaction as well as repetitive interests and activities.

Here are some of the characteristics that may be present.

### Strengths exhibited by individuals with autism

- Non-verbal reasoning skills
- Reading skills
- Perceptual motor skills
- Drawing skills
- Computer interest and skills
- Exceptional memory
- Visual Spatial abilities
- Music skills



### Weaknesses exhibited by individuals with autism

The above exceptional skills may be combined with subtle or significant delays in other areas of development. All individuals with the diagnosis demonstrate some of the following:

- Impairment in Social relationships
- Deficits in communication/language
- Perseveration on interests and activities
- Dependence on routine
- Abnormal responses to sensory stimulation
- Behaviour problems
- Variability of intellectual functioning
- Uneven development profile
- Difficulties in sleeping, toileting and eating
- Immune irregularities
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Gastrointestinal problems

