

Autism Spectrum Disorder

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Diagnostic Criteria: Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts which impair ones overall functioning:

- ✓ Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
- ✓ Insistence on sameness, routines, or rituals
- ✓ Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
- ✓ Hyper- or Hypo- reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment

Hyper-sensitivity: Over-responsiveness	Hypo-sensitivity: Under-Responsiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Stimulation may be painful- Seeks calm- Examples:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Covers ears when confronted with noises (alarms, yelling...)o Squints and covers eyes when confronted with lightso Physical touch is overwhelming and unpleasant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Shows no reaction to stimuli that others find uncomfortable- Seeks stimuli- Examples:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Does not withdraw their hand from a hot stoveo Wears shorts in freezing weathero Applies extra pressure when touching objects

Common signs of ASD

- Poor eye contact
- Lacks appropriate facial expressions
- Speaks with abnormal tone or rhythm
- Socially awkward
- Fails to respond to his or her name
- Stereotypical movements: rocking, hand wringing, head banging, running back and forth

Did you know?

- ✓ 1 in 54 children has been identified as having ASD
- ✓ Occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups
- ✓ 4x more common among boys than girls

Common Misconceptions (below are all false)

- ⊗ Always agreeable
- ⊗ No interest in peers
- ⊗ No interest in socializing
- ⊗ Always tell the truth
- ⊗ Do not question authority figures



Helpful Tips for First Responders:

Remember, individuals with ASD may:

- Have no sense of danger
- Be overwhelmed by your presence
- Hyper-focus on your equipment
- Correct your speech or grammar

Their behavioral responses represent attempts to compensate

- They are not capable of being flexible – they are rigid
- You must find ways to be flexible in the moment to compensate on their behalf
 - ✓ This helps keep everyone safe and improve communication

Do's and Don'ts of Communication with an individual on the spectrum

- ✓ Assign one person to them (for consistency)
- ✓ Lay out clear rules and expectations
- ✓ Avoid power struggles
- ✓ Check for understanding frequently
- ✓ Build rapport (use the tools and their interests)
- ⊗ Don't overestimate their coping skills when they demonstrate strong verbal abilities
- ⊗ Don't take their behavior or responses personally

Considerations when using the Carter Kit

Weighted Blanket: Useful for hypo- (pressure, touch) and hyper- (feeling of security) sensitivities

Fidget Toys: Hyposensitivity. For patients that wish to be active and need stimuli

Earmuffs: Hypersensitivity. Useful for patients sensitive to loud noises such as sirens

Sunglasses: Hypersensitivity. Can help those who are bothered by bright lights or sunlight

Nonverbal Communication card: Useful for those who may not verbalize their needs or wants

For more information and additional training, visit www.carterkits.org

