



# Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder



Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how people experience the world and communicate with others.

**Move past common misconceptions and learn how to focus on personalized support that helps each person thrive.**

## A Multi-Dimensional Spectrum

Autism is understood as a spectrum, rather than a mild-to-severe scale. Each person with autism has unique characteristics that fall into two domains:

1

**Social communication**, such as difficulty holding conversations, responding to interactions or making friends

2

**Restricted or repetitive behaviors**, such as sensory-seeking or -avoiding tendencies, narrow interests and difficulty with change

### The "Why"

While there is no single known cause of autism, evidence suggests a combination of factors.



**Genetics.** About 80% of autism cases are linked to inherited genetic mutations.



**Environment.** Older parental age, premature birth and exposure to air pollution may contribute to autism development.

**There is no link between vaccines and autism or acetaminophen (Tylenol) and autism.**

## Seeing the Full Picture

Over 3% of 8-year-old children and over 2% of adults have been diagnosed with autism. The increase in autism diagnoses is a sign of progress.



### Better tools.

Updated standards help experts identify more people who need support.



### Better reach.

More people, including women and underserved communities, have more access to screenings.



## Tools for Success

There is no cure for autism, but personalized support can focus on empowering each person and addressing strengths, challenges and goals.



### Education.

Structured, individualized programs in school can improve academic outcomes.



### Medication.

Some medicines can help improve symptoms, such as high energy, anxiety and trouble focusing.



### Therapy.

Speech, occupational, physical and behavioral therapies can help with daily functioning and quality of life.

**Early diagnosis and a personalized treatment plan can make all the difference. Visit [weillcornell.org/doctors](http://weillcornell.org/doctors) to find a provider who understands the unique needs of people with autism.**

