

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

L-Awtizmi



X'inhu l-Awtiżmu?

L-awtiżmu hija disturb tal-iżvilupp newroloġiku, ikkaratterizzat minn diffikultajiet fl-interazzjoni soċjali u fil-komunikazzjoni, imġiba ristretta u ripetuta, u f'interessi u attivitajiet li ma jirriflettux l-età tal-persuna

X'inhuma s-sintomi?

Is-sintomi generalment jibdew jidhru minn età żgħira, imma jippersistu matul ʔajjet il-persuna. Is-severità tas-sintomi tvarja bejn persuna u oħra. Is-sintomi jinkludu:

Abbiltajiet fl-interazzjoni u l-komunikazzjoni:

- Ma tħarisx jew tħares ftit li xejn f'għajnejn ʔaddieħor
- Ma tirrispondix għal ismek jew tirrispondi tard wisq
- Issibha diffiċli tifhem l-emozzjonijiet ta' ʔaddieħor
- Issibha diffiċli ʔzomm konverżazzjoni
- Ma taqsamx interessi personali ma' ʔaddieħor
- Issiba diffiċli tagħmel ʔbieb u tiparteċipa f'aktivitajiet soċjali

Imġiba ristretta u ripetittiva:

- Issibha diffiċli taċċetta bidla
- Timxi ma' rutina speċifika u ma tkunx flessibbli li tbiddel ir-rutina
- Tirrepeti ċertu movimenti jew kliem
- Ikollok interess intensiv fuq suġġetti jew oġġetti partikolari
- Tkun iktar sensitiv/a għad-dawl, materjal tad-drapp, ʔsejjes u temperaturi

Karatteristiċi oħra

- Iddum biex titkellem
- Iddum sabiex tagħmel ċertu movimenti
- Tiekol b'mod erraticu
- Ansjetà
- Nuqqas ta' attenzjoni
- Energija ʔejda



**IMPAIRED SOCIAL
INTERACTIONS**



**REPETITIVE
BEHAVIOUR**



**DELAYED AND DISORDERED
LANGUAGE**



**RESTRICTED RANGE OF
INTERESTS**

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder and is mainly characterised by difficulties in social interaction, communication, restricted and repetitive behaviour, interests and activities which are not age appropriate.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The signs and symptoms occur during the developmental stages (early childhood) but persist for the lifetime of the person. The severity of symptoms varies between different people. Symptoms include:

Social Communication and Interaction Skills:

- Make little or no eye contact.
- Having slow response or no responding to one's name.
- Find it difficult to understand others' emotions (e.g. being sad, being hurt).
- Difficulty in sustaining a conversation.
- Does not usually share interests and things with others.
- Find it difficult to be in social events and to make friends.

Restrictive and/or Repetitive Behaviors:

- Difficulty coping with change.
- Follows a strict routine and finds it difficult to manage any changes.
- Repeating certain movements or words.
- Having intense interest in specific topics or objects.
- Being more sensitive to light, texture of fabrics, sound, and temperature.

Other characteristics:

- Delayed speech
- Delayed movement skills
- Unusual eating habits
- Anxiety
- Inattentiveness
- Hyperactivity

X'jikkawża l-awtiżmu?

Il-kawża primarja tal-awtiżmu għadha mhix magħrufa. Madankollu huwa maħsub li l-ġenetika hi fattur importanti. L-ambjent li l-persuna titwieled fih ukoll iħalli impatt fuq l-iżvilupp tal-awtiżmu. Xi fatturi li jilagħbu parti importanti fl-awtiżmu jinkludu:

- Ikollok qraba li jkunu jbatu mill-awtiżmu
- Ikollok qraba li jbatu minn kundizzjonijiet oħra tal-iżvilupp (e.ż. Down's Syndrome)
- Ma tkunx tiżen ħafna fit-twelid
- Titwieled meta l-ġenituri jkunu diġà kbar fl-età

Kif tingħata d-dijanjozi tal-awtiżmu?

Fil-maġġoranza tal-każi, is-sintomi relatati jkunu viżibbli sakemm it-tifel/tifla jagħlqu s-sentejn. Fil-bidu jkun meħtieġ li jsir assessment sabiex jiġi determinat l-iżvilupp ġenerali. Isir ukoll eżami mediku sabiex jiġu esklużi kundizzjonijiet mediċi. Screening sabiex jiġi determinat l-iżvilupp isir ukoll b'mod regolari matul it-tfulija. Kull informazzjoni neċessarja tiġi meħuda direttament mingħand il-kuratur primarju, il-professjonisti u l-edukaturi kollha involuti fil-każ tat-tifel/tifla.

What are the causes?

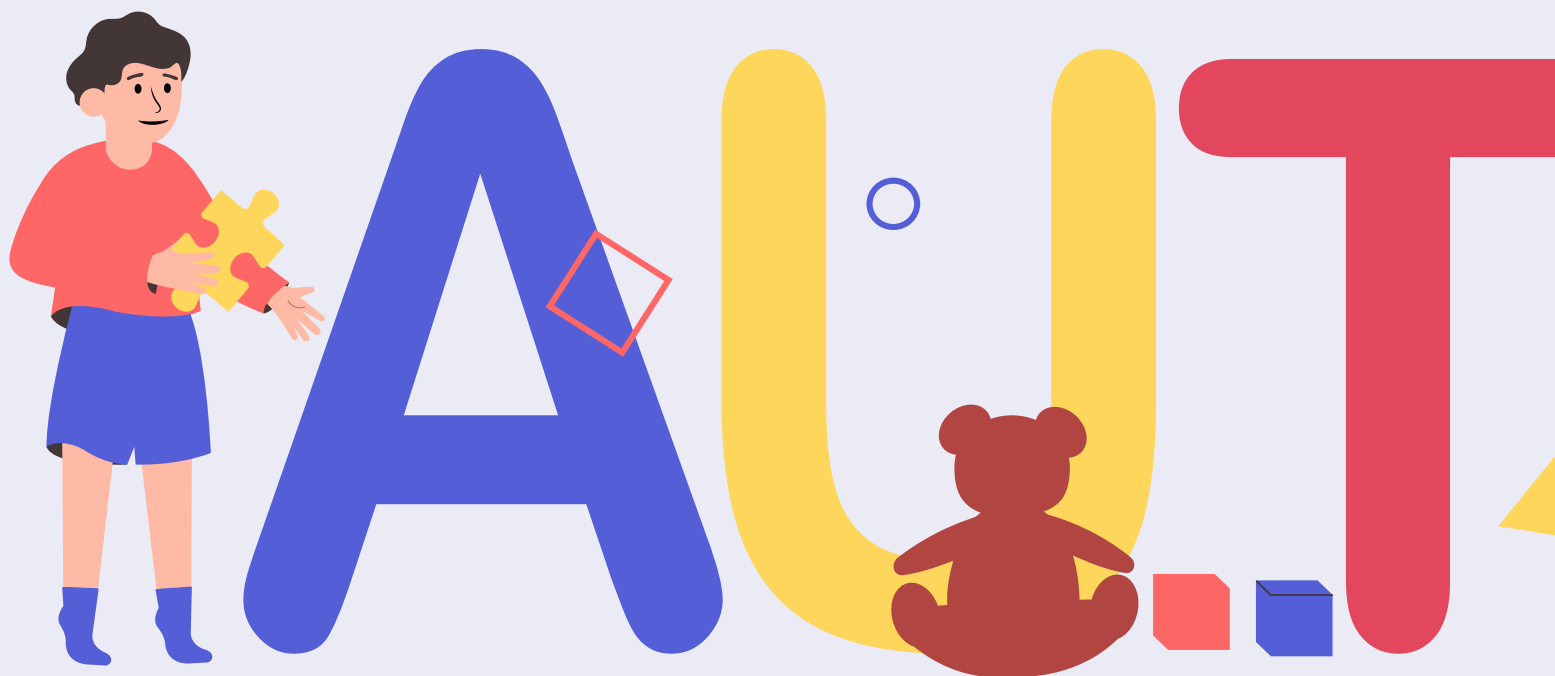
The primary cause of ASD is still unknown, but it is likely that genes play an important role in the development of ASD. Furthermore, the impact of the environment on the child's development may also lead to ASD. The main risk factors include:

- Having a family history of ASD.
- Having a family history of other developmental disorders (e.g. Down's Syndrome).
- Having low birth weight.
- Being born to older parents

How is autism diagnosed?

Most often signs of ASD can be seen by the age of 2 years. Initially the child will be screened for the general development. Furthermore, a thorough medical examination will be performed to exclude any medical causes. Developmental screening is performed at several age intervals. All information will be gathered from the child's care giver and any professionals or educators who may be involved in the care of the child.





Kif jiġi ttrattat l-awtiżmu?

It-trattament għall-awtiżmu ma jfejjaqx il-kundizzjoni, imma jikkontrolla s-sintomi b'mod illi l-persuna affetwata tkun tista' tagħmel l-attivitajiet ta' kuljum b'mod effiċjenti. Hemm diversi forom ta' trattamenti li jintużaw, fosthom dawk li jiffukaw fuq l-imġiba, l-iżvilupp u l-edukazzjoni. Il-medicina tintuża sabiex tnaqqas l-enerġija żejda, in-nuqqas t'attenzjoni, l-irritabilità u l-aggressjoni.

X'għajnuna tista' tipprovdi l-familja?

L-għajnuna li tipprovdi l-familja, speċjalment il-ġenturi waqt il-fażijiet inizjali tal-ħajja, għandha impatt qawwi fuq l-iżvilupp ġenerali. Wieħed jista':

- Jikkomunika b'mod ċar u effettiv. Uża lingwaġġ sempliċi, sinjali jew anke modi viżwali. Kun paċenjuż u agħti t-tifel/tifla ħin biżżejjed sabiex jipproċessa u jirrispondi għall-informazzjoni,
- Urihom li huma maħbuba u aċċettati, u għinjom jinnavigaw sitwazzjonijiet soċjali,
- Oħloq struttura. Oħloq rutina għall-attivitajiet ta' kuljum, u agħmel mezz li żżomm magħha,
- Ippremjahom għas-suċċessi tagħhom, avolja żgħar. Inkoraġġihom jippruvaw affarjiet godda,
- Ħafna nies bl-awtiżmu jkunu sensitivi għal ċertu stimuli, bħal ħsejjes qawwija jew dawl qawwi. Oħloq attivitajiet li għinuhom jikkontrollaw il-bżonnijiet sensorjali tagħhom, u jsiru iktar komdi fl-ambjent tagħhom.



How is autism treated?

Treatment for ASD is targeted to reduce symptoms and ensure that the child can manage the daily tasks efficiently. Several types of treatment are used to target specific areas of functioning, these include behavioural, developmental and educational approaches. Medications can be used to reduce hyperactivity, inattention, irritability, and aggression.

How can families provide support?

The support offered by family, especially by parents in the early life-stages, has a profound effect on the child's overall development. One can:

- Communicate clearly and effectively. Use simple language, clear gestures, and if needed visual aides. Be patient and give the child enough time to respond or process the information,
- Show them love and acceptance and help them navigate social situations,
- Create structure. Establish a clear routine for daily tasks, and follow the routine as much as possible,
- Use rewards. Appraise them for their accomplishments, no matter how small. Encourage them to keep trying new things and take up new challenges,
- Respect sensory sensitivities. Many are sensitive to specific stimuli, like loud noises or bright light. Use sensory integration activities to help them manage their sensory needs and grow comfortable in their environment.

Aktar Informazzjoni / Further information:

Websites:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html>

https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd#part_2283

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/autism/what-is-autism-spectrum-disorder>

Support Groups:

- The Malta Autism Centre
- Autism Parents Association – Malta

Kuntatti / Contacts:

Helpline	1579
Qormi Mental Health Clinic	2330 4450
Paola Mental Health Clinic	2330 4550
Cospicua Mental Health Clinic	2330 4570
Floriana Mental Health Clinic	2330 4910
Mosta Mental Health Clinic	2330 4780
Mtarfa Mental Health Clinic	2330 4541
Crisis Resolution Home Treatment (CRHT)	2330 4500/4501
Children & Young People Psychiatric Services (CYPS)	2330 4750

NEED HELP!



**NATIONAL MENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES**

