

10 Symptoms of Asperger's Syndrome: Know the Signs



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Asperger's syndrome is part of the autism spectrum disorder, also known as ASD. According to medical experts, it is a mild form of autism and generally manifests without extreme mental disabilities. The main outward characteristics of a person with Asperger's syndrome are poor social skills, lacking nonverbal communication, and being clumsy.

Unlike other forms of autism, brain imaging has not shown a common pathology between sufferers. Scientists believe that there may be a genetic cause of the syndrome, as many times multiple people in one household can have the illness. So far, no genes have been identified in relation to the syndrome.

In a small percentage of cases, exposure to certain chemicals and medications while in utero are believed to have contributed to Asperger's. There are many theories of how an individual may develop Asperger's syndrome, but none have been conclusively proven yet. Currently, there are hundreds of studies from scientists around the world trying to understand the cause and treatment of this syndrome.

Here are 10 classic symptoms of Asperger's syndrome. If you are worried about yourself or a loved one having this syndrome, talk to your doctor about screening options.

1. Failure to Develop Friendships

Children who have Asperger's syndrome may have difficulty cultivating friendships. They may not connect with their peers due to a lack of social skills. They may find it hard to talk to other children or to participate in group activities. This can be difficult for a child with Asperger's as they may want very deeply to connect with their peers.

Oppositely, some children with Asperger's have no desire to make friendships and will prefer to be by themselves.

2. Selective Mutism

Young children with Asperger's may demonstrate selective mutism as a symptom. This occurs when they will only speak freely with people they are comfortable with, and may not speak at all to strangers. Extreme cases last for years. Immediate family members are typically unaffected, as the child often feels comfortable speaking to them. Selective mutism more often occurs at school and in public and some children may refuse to speak to anyone starting from a very young age. This condition can go away on its own, or your child may benefit from therapy.

3. Inability to Empathize

Individuals with Asperger's syndrome may find difficulty empathizing with others. As they age, the affected person will learn the accepted social response for interacting with others. While they may react appropriately and say the "right" things, they may not understand why the other person is truly upset. This can be an issue in childhood as the individual with Asperger's may play too roughly with their peers or say harsh things, unknowingly hurting the other person. When confronted for this behaviour, the child may respond that what they said was true and that they do not understand the issue.

4. Unable to Make Eye Contact or Forcing Eye Contact

People who suffer from Asperger's syndrome may find it difficult to make and hold eye contact with people they are speaking to. Some believe this condition is brought about from a lack of confidence. Others recount how making eye contact can make them very uncomfortable, almost painful. There is also the theory that people with Asperger's syndrome do not realize how important eye contact is for social communication. This may lead to the opposite problem of

forcing eye contact. This can make people even more uncomfortable, while the individual with Asperger's believes they are being more approachable.

5. Social Awkwardness

The idea that people with Asperger's syndrome are not passionate is completely wrong. One common term professionals use to describe people who suffer from this illness is "active but odd". They may become very socially active, forming close friendships. Others may try to surround themselves with people, making lots of close acquaintances, but no deep friendships. This can be related to how well the individual empathizes with others. People with Asperger's syndrome may not show many outward signs of this illness.

6. Narrowed Interests

Individuals with Asperger's syndrome may do poorly in school, but that is not to say they don't have specific interests. Instead, their interests are likely very narrowed and focused. It could be playing video games, making models, or drawing. These activities focus their minds and provide a sense of comfort for them. If they are forced to leave their projects, they may become distressed. Likewise, if their projects are failing. Fostering these narrowed interests is important for emotional and mental support.

7. Sticking to Routine

Sticking to a routine can be very important for people with Asperger's syndrome. They may become greatly distressed and anxious when their schedule changes. New situations can be frightening. A routine can help manage the anxiety of people with Asperger's syndrome. Thankfully, much of our world runs on tight schedules. If you suspect your child may have Asperger's syndrome, putting them on a tight schedule may be an effective way to help manage some of their symptoms.

8. Literal Interpretations

One of the symptoms of Asperger's syndrome is literally interpreting what people say. The affected individual may not understand sarcasm, instead taking what the person has said as truth. The idea that people with Asperger's syndrome do not understand humor is wrong. These individuals may be the funniest people you have ever met. When they realize the fault of their literal interpretations, they are able to understand the true meaning behind what is being said, perhaps with some explanation.

9. Excellent Pattern Recognition

Another symptom of Asperger's syndrome is the amazing ability to recognize patterns. Often these individuals' brains are trying to make sense of their surroundings, so a break in pattern may show itself quite clearly. This ability may be evident in childhood, as early schooling develops the neural pathways of pattern recognition. While children with Asperger's syndrome may find the school setting difficult and struggle with their grades, pattern problems like math and in art may be very enriching. Fostering this natural talent is a great idea.

10. Poor Motor Skills

Some people with Asperger's syndrome may find it difficult to control their gross and fine motor skills. The motor issues may manifest through poor handwriting thought to be caused by poor hand-eye coordination.