

# DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental condition that can be identified in early childhood. The word “spectrum” is used as people with autism show varying levels of autism-related behaviours. Signs of autism can be noticed in children from as young as 12-months. Autism-related differences or difficulties often persist in adulthood, although these signs can change as the child grows and improves.

Children on the autism spectrum show differences in how they communicate and interact with people. They have difficulties keeping to-and-fro play or conversations going. They may not use eye contact, gestures, and body language similarly to other children. They do not learn social behaviours as naturally as other children.

Children on the autism spectrum also show restricted interests or repetitive behaviours. They may be repetitive in their speech or actions, prefer sticking to fixed routines, have unusually high or extremely focused interests, or have sensory experiences that are different from others.

These autism differences affect how they learn and go about everyday activities as expected for their age.

Even so, children on the autism spectrum have their unique strengths. They can learn, thrive, and grow up to be happy, healthy, and achieving adults. Knowing if your child has autism, understanding their needs, giving your child the right supports through early intervention, and helping your child find the right fit for themselves in the community, gives your child a good chance for better outcomes.

## HOW IS AUTISM DIAGNOSED?

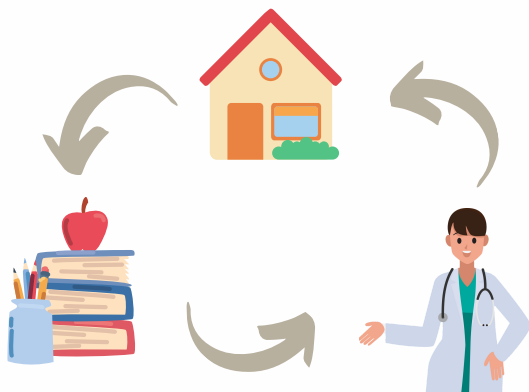
An autism diagnostic assessment involves the collection of detailed information about your child’s development and their behaviours in everyday situations.

Your doctor or psychologist will:

- Observe your child’s behaviours.
- Interview you to understand your child’s development and behaviours.
- Consider information from your child’s teachers and other healthcare and educational professionals who have interacted with your child.

Your child will be provided with toys and fun activities to play with during the session.

## HOW CAN AN AUTISM DIAGNOSIS HELP MY CHILD?



An autism diagnosis helps:

- Caregivers, teachers, and therapists understand your child’s differences, needs, and strengths.
- To inform on the types of intervention and support that are appropriate for your child.
- To support your child’s placement in a suitable early intervention programme.
- To assist in planning for your child’s future educational options.
- To support applications for subsidies (e.g., Caregivers Training Grant from the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), tax relief)

# HOW CAN AN AUTISM DIAGNOSIS HELP IN MY CHILD'S EDUCATION?



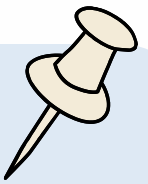
Children on the autism spectrum can be very different in their cognitive abilities and everyday living skills for independence and group learning. Therefore, some can learn in a mainstream school, while others may benefit from a more supported environment or customised learning provided by special education (SPED) schools. The diagnosis will allow your child to access specialised support in mainstream school or enrolment in SPED schools.

## ARE THE RESULTS CONFIDENTIAL?

The results of the assessment are confidential and accessible only to authorised healthcare professionals involved in your child's care.

You can decide who you share your child's autism diagnosis with. Any sharing of such information outside of our healthcare system requires your written consent.

## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE ASSESSMENT?



You can prepare your child for the assessment by ensuring that they receive enough sleep the night before and has had a good meal on the day of the assessment. If your child is ill, or on medication on the day of the assessment, or in the days leading up to the assessment, please call our clinic beforehand to check if the assessment should proceed.

You may want to bring some snacks, some of your child's favourite toys and a jacket for your child.

Depending on your child's age and language skills, you can tell them about what will happen at the assessment. For example, you may say "We will be meeting a doctor or psychologist tomorrow. He/she will play with you and talk to me. You can play with different toys and do some fun activities."

You can prepare for the assessment by writing down questions that you have, and what you have noticed about your child, including when specific behaviours started, how often and how long you have seen those behaviours.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE ASSESSMENT?

Your doctor or psychologist will share the results of the assessment with you personally. This may be done at the end of the assessment session, or as a separate session on another day\*.

If your child is assessed to have autism, the assessment report can be used for the long term to provide documentation of your child's autism diagnosis. Your child will not need to do an autism diagnostic assessment again.

A copy of the assessment report will usually be provided to you 4 to 6 weeks after the session. You are encouraged to share the report with your child's teachers and therapists, so that they better understand your child's needs and how to support them.

After the assessment, your doctor will continue to monitor your child's progress and needs through regular follow-up appointments.

\*For some children, the assessment may require more time or sessions. The timing and sessions (including information about the charges) will be discussed with you.

We hope this information can help you understand autism and how it is diagnosed. We look forward to meeting you and your child at the assessment.