

# Early Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



As a caregiver, you know your child best. Maybe you've noticed delays or changes in your child's development. Or perhaps someone else has pointed it out to you. Research shows that children with ASD do best when they receive help as early as possible. That's why it's a good idea to know some early signs of ASD. If you notice your child showing any of the signs below, talk to your healthcare provider or HealthySteps Specialist about ASD.



- **They don't engage in joint attention.** Joint attention is shared attention. For example, your child sees a fire engine and points at it to make sure you see it too.
- **They don't use gestures.** Not using gestures—such as pointing— can be a sign of ASD. For example, most babies near age 1 will wave, clap, or lift their arms when they wish to be picked up. See the “16 Gestures by 16 Months” handout (noted below) to know what gestures to expect.
- **They have speech delays (or differences).** Some children with ASD have language delays. They may not use a lot of words or respond when you speak to them. They might also only repeat words they hear instead of saying words on their own.
- **They avoid eye contact.** Some children with ASD will make eye contact but won't hold it for very long.

- **They met language milestones, but then regressed.** Children may meet milestones and then lose ground. It is a regression if your child was using words and then suddenly (or slowly) stopped.
- **They show high sensory needs and/or differences.** Many children with ASD are sensitive to sound, touch, and texture.



Your provider's office will likely screen for ASD at your child's 18- and/or 24-month well-child visit. Ask any questions you may have about the screening. Sometimes there is a lag between the time when early signs of ASD are noticed and when your child can be evaluated. Lean on your HealthySteps Specialist with any concerns. Ask about available resources and services.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The American Academy of Pediatrics

- [3 Early Signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\)](#)

The FIRST WORDS® Project / Baby Navigator

- [16 Gestures by 16 Months \(English, Spanish, and Creole\)](#)
- [16 Actions with Objects by 16 Months \(English, Spanish, and Creole\)](#)
- [Checklist of 16 Early Signs of Autism \(English\)](#)

SCAN FOR MORE INFO

