

# Developmental Disorders in Children

## **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**



**Child Assessment Service**

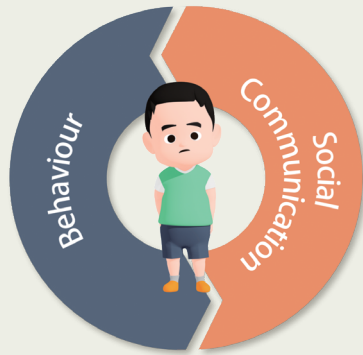
Department of Health

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

[www.dhcas.gov.hk](http://www.dhcas.gov.hk)



# 01 What is **ASD**?



ASD is a neurodevelopmental disorder. It is characterized by different degrees of impairment in the areas of social communication, interaction and behaviours. The manifestations of ASD symptoms vary among individuals. Sometimes the difference can be quite big.

## Common clinical presentations:

**Deficits in social interaction:** Their presentation in social aspects may vary from being aloof, passive to over-passionate or odd-mannered. Some children may show limited social relatedness. They may have difficulty in developing close relationships with their peers, parents or care-takers.

**Deficits in non-verbal communication:** They are also weak in using non-verbal skills in social communications. These children usually have weak eye contact and seldom indicate their needs by pointing when they are young.



## **Deficits in relationship and friendship building:**

They prefer to play alone with little spontaneous sharing. As they lack skills in social interaction, they have difficulty in developing friendships.

They usually have difficulties in processing complex social cues and implicit social rules. Hence they may fail to adjust their behaviour to adapt to different social situations.



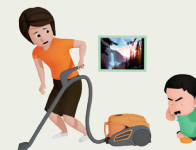
**Stereotyped or repetitive behaviour:** Repetitive behaviours are common in early childhood, such as lining up objects, opening and closing of doors, or spinning the wheels of toy car. Flapping of hands, head banging or self-spinning may occur in some children when they get excited or agitated.



**Insistence on sameness:** Some children follow daily routines rigidly and have difficulty in accepting new changes. For example, they may insist on taking the same route, keeping things in their original positions or refuse to try new food. Small changes in their daily routine may cause big emotional distress in these children.



**Narrow and restricted interests:** They may like to memorize bus routes, the names of MTR stations, or information about space and dinosaurs.



**Sensory processing problems:** They may have over or under reactions to sensory inputs, which creates big fear or avoidance behaviour.



## 02 What causes **ASD**?

ASD is now widely accepted as a neurodevelopmental disorder that is highly heritable and resulting from multiple genetic and non-genetic causes.



## 03 How does **ASD** affect children?

Children with ASD vary greatly in their presenting problems. This variation is associated with their age, language ability, intellectual development and related therapy received.

Children with ASD usually have weak language ability. They may have various degrees of language impairment including poor comprehension, expression and pragmatic skills. Some children may have language abilities close to their peers. However, they may only like to talk about things that they are interested in, and this restricted interest will affect peer interaction.

In general, children's restricted and rigid behaviours may reduce as they grow up, but their social and communication impairment may get worse when social demands increase.



## 04 How to help children with **ASD**?

Early identification and intervention can help these children to make progress and improve their integration in the community. The best intervention at present is behavioural and educational training. They are effective in enhancing the social and communication skills of these children.



At present, there is no evidence that medication can cure the social or communication impairments in children with ASD.





## 05 What is the outlook of children with **ASD**?

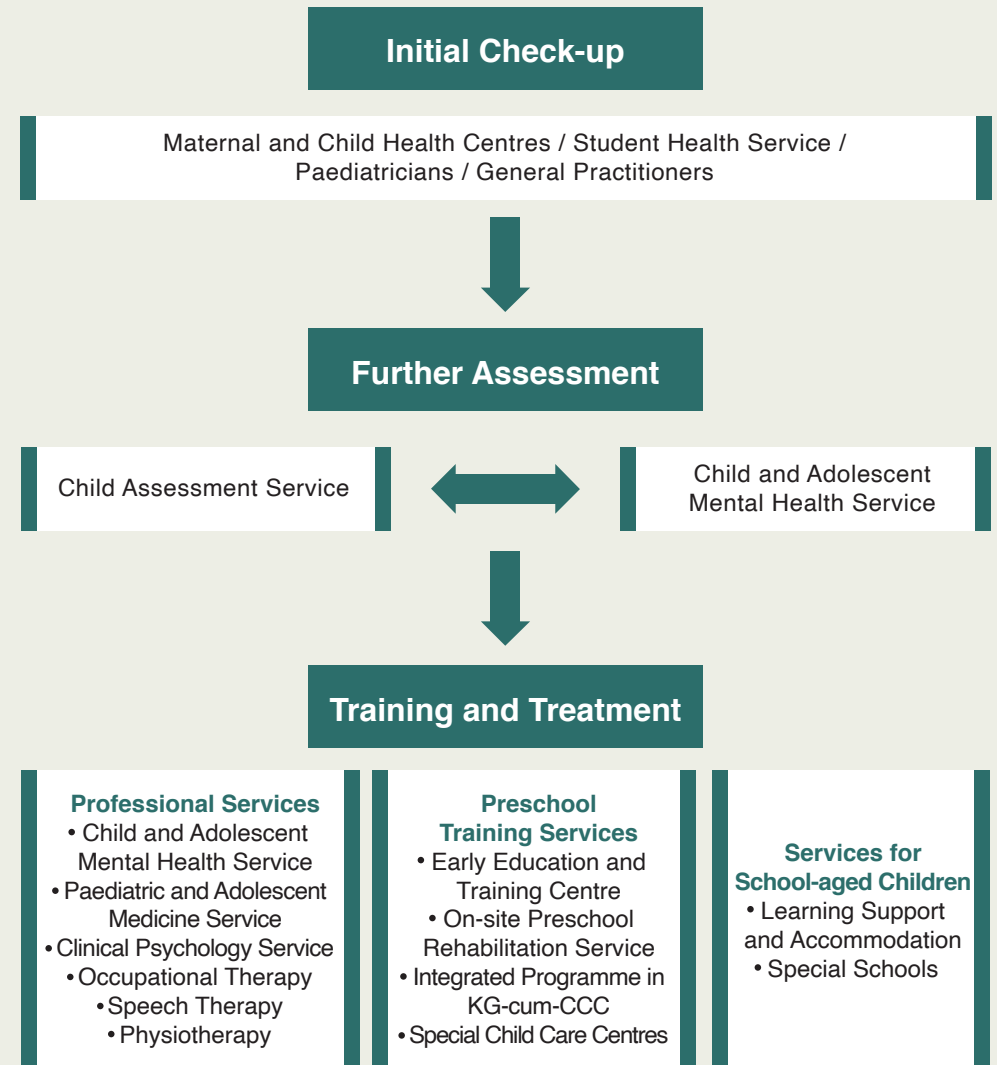
The presentation of ASD symptoms varies greatly across individuals. Their conditions also vary a lot when they grow up.



With early intervention and training, good family and environmental support, children with ASD will make progress with time.



## Referral and Management





## Related **Websites**

**Education Bureau: Integrated Education and Special Education information Online**  
<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

**The Parents Association of Autistic Children in Mainstream Education**  
[www.paacme.org.hk](http://www.paacme.org.hk)

**Society for the Welfare of the Autistic Persons**  
[www.swap.org.hk](http://www.swap.org.hk)

**Hong Kong Education City : Inclusion Pavilion**  
[www.hkedcity.net/sen](http://www.hkedcity.net/sen)

**Centre for Disease Control and Prevention**  
[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism)

**National Institute of Mental Health**  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

**The National Autistic Society**  
[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

Some of the websites only have Chinese version



FOR more  
information



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