

# TIPS



## for Early Identification of Autism and Related Pervasive Developmental Disorders

Research has demonstrated that in children with autism or related pervasive developmental disorders, early intervention has long-lasting beneficial effects on intellect, adaptive behaviors, and quality of life. The following are symptoms associated with major functions of development. You should seek professional help if your child exhibits symptoms in several of these categories.

### **Attention/Self-Regulatory Behavior**

- Excessive fidgetiness and/or staring episodes
- Avoidance of or decreased eye contact
- Sleep disturbance

### **Sensory Motor**

- Sensory sensitivity (ie, irritated by clothing, brushing hair, touch, lights, sound, odors, tastes)
- Sensory seeking (ie, rocking, spinning, rhythmic behaviors)
- Repetitive behaviors (ie, eye blinking, nose sniffing, throat clearing, hand flapping, routine behaviors)

### **Speech Language**

- Delayed language (you may suspect a hearing problem)
- Heightened use of gestures versus speech
- Mostly silent or echoes/repeats selected sounds or words

### **Memory**

- Difficulty remembering how to start or complete familiar tasks
- Difficulty with multistep directions (much repetition is needed)
- Can develop excessive routines/patterns

### **Mood/Social**

- Easily frustrated or overwhelmed
- Transition results in heightened anxiety
- Does not actively engage in play (mostly side-by-side play)

*This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. This month's contribution was submitted by Val L. Scaramella-Nowinski, PsyD, of the Child Health Initiative for Learning and Development in Orland Park, Illinois. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at [info@neurologyreviews.com](mailto:info@neurologyreviews.com).*