

What is autism?



Autism affects the way a person sees, experiences and understands the world.

Autism is a neurological developmental difference that affects the way an individual relates to the environment and people in it.

The effects differ from individual to individual, which is why the term 'spectrum' is used. It reflects the fact that everyone's lived experience of autism is different.

Individuals on the spectrum may have skills in particular areas, while finding other aspects of life particularly challenging. How skills develop across a life span varies as much as autism itself and can vary significantly from person to person.

How many people are on the autism spectrum?

More than 290,900 Australians, or 1 in 91 people, are autistic.



This represents individuals across all ages, genders and demographics.

The greatest recorded prevalence of autism in Australia is in the school age years.

The age at which characteristics of autism begin to be recognised will vary from person to person. The manner in which characteristics present themselves will differ too. Age, cognitive ability and other factors can influence development and the way in which characteristics of autism present.

Some characteristics of autism

Each autistic person is an individual with unique qualities, strengths and support needs.

Autistic people often have a desire for routine and predictability, find enjoyment and pleasure in a particular area or item and have their own style of communication and social interaction. For many individuals on the autism spectrum the way in which sensory information is processed can also differ from those who are not autistic. It is important to be aware however that how characteristics present for an autistic person will vary from individual to individual, so while one person on the spectrum may have a strong desire for routine and predictability, someone else on the spectrum may not.

A person's skills and support needs can change from day to day, or year to year, depending on their stage of life, regulation state, the environment, familiarity and complexity of tasks, support networks and many other contributing factors.

As with everyone, autistic people have strengths and challenges. Sometimes, to succeed in an educational or workplace environment, adjustments may need to be made or accommodations put in place to help each individual reach their full potential.

By striving for an accessible and inclusive society, we can support everyone to reach their full potential.



Do you want to know more about autism?

We have a range of resources that can be accessed for more information.

These include:

- The Spectrum - thespectrum.org.au
- The Autism Friendly Charter - autismfriendlycharter.org.au
- Autistics' Guide to Adulthood - autisticsguide.org.au
- Autism SA Website - autismsa.org.au
- Resource Library
- Amaze's Autism Connect National Autism helpline - 1300 308 699

Autism SA supports and services

As the longest standing autism focused organisation in Australia, our staff understand autism and have experience in a wide range of contemporary strategies and practices.

Our team can guide and support you in creating a personalised plan of supports and services, working towards your individualised goals at any stage of your journey.

For more information

For more information about autism and the services and supports offered at Autism SA please call us on 1300 288 476 or email contactus@autismsa.org.au.

"One of the main things I like to explain is that autistic people have varied abilities and characteristics, there's not one single experience of autism"

- Zoran Bekric, autistic adult



AUTISTICS' GUIDE TO ADULTHOOD

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