

Autism Through the Lifespan

In our culture, autism spectrum disorder is often thought of as a childhood condition, with public attention focused primarily on children and the importance of early detection and intervention. However, autism is a lifelong condition, and the available, necessary supports and treatments change as people on the spectrum move through major life phases. With the rising diagnostic rate at 1 in 59, we must accommodate the pressing need for supports and programs for people on the spectrum across the lifespan.

Like everyone else, people with autism move through significant life changes. Their quality of life depends not only on the foundation provided in childhood, but also on ongoing supports that are specific to their educational, medical, social, recreational, family and employment needs.

The Autism Society supports people with autism and their families through three critical stages of life.

Early Detection and Intervention

The Autism Society promotes [early identification](#) and access to effective treatments before age 3. Autism behaviors can become apparent as early as 18 months, and parents should investigate as soon as they suspect autism or another developmental issue. Early diagnosis of autism can reduce lifetime care costs by two-thirds, as it allows parents, therapists and others to begin [treatments](#) sooner. Learning as much as possible about autism and its community is important at this stage.

Building a Strong Foundation from Childhood through Adolescence

The Autism Society helps parents and caregivers build treatment and [educational programs](#) so that all children and adolescents can reach their fullest potential. At this stage, it is important to understand how the school system can help (for example, through an Individualized Education Plan) and how to prepare for the transition to adult life.

A Life of Happiness and Dignity

The Autism Society works to ensure that every adult with autism has access to services and supports that maximize independence and secure the highest quality of life. For many, employment and living in the community are goals to pursue during adulthood. Self-advocacy is also important to many people on the spectrum, as more people with autism are speaking out about their experiences, identities and needs.

► For more Autism Resources go to: autismsociety.org/resources-by-topic

The **Autism Society of America** has been improving the lives of all affected by autism for over 50 years and envisions a world where individuals and families living with autism are able to maximize their quality of life, are treated with the highest level of dignity, and live in a society in which their talents and skills are appreciated and valued. We provide advocacy, education, information and referral, support, and community at national, state and local levels through our strong nationwide network of Affiliates.

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Autism Society

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