

Asperger Syndrome (“AS”)

AS is a pervasive developmental disorder commonly considered to be part of the autistic spectrum of disorders. It affects a person’s ability to socialise and to cope with various situations. AS may also be referred to as ‘High Functioning Autism’ or ‘PDD NOS’.

AS is not usually diagnosed before the age of three and is more common in boys than girls. The main features of AS become evident during early childhood and remain throughout life, although the degree of actual disability varies.

Some Features of Children with AS

- May have an excellent rote memory and absorb facts easily.
- May display certain repetitive behaviours and react uncharacteristically under pressure.
- May be sensitive to certain sensations, such as noise or light, and may have strong preferences for certain foods based on colour or taste.
- May be very anxious and are often unable to cope with any form of criticism or imperfection.
- Find it difficult to learn social skills and appear to need to learn a procedure for each social situation.
- May appear clumsy and may have an unusual gait and stance.
- May be seen by others as odd or eccentric.
- Often have special interests (such as computers) which they may use as a way of interacting with others who share a similar interest.

- Development of language may be delayed. If not, language skills may appear fine but practical use of language may be limited. A child with AS may have poor social understanding and interpret messages in a very literal way.
- Can be the victims of teasing in a school environment which may cause them to withdraw into isolated activities.

It is important to note that, while children with AS may have many of the features referred to above, individuals vary enormously, especially in areas of intelligence and temperament.

Areas of Difficulty for Children with As:

(1) Social Interaction

Impairment in reciprocal social interaction, showing in:

- a) An inability to interact or play with age-peers;
- b) A lack of desire to be in the company of age-peers;
- c) A lack of appreciation of social cues resulting in odd, socially or emotionally inappropriate behaviour.

Children with AS appear stuck at the ‘egocentric stage’ of social and emotional development and therefore they may perceive the world almost exclusively from their own point of view. Often there is a lack of empathy for others.

(2) Communication

Children with AS sometimes speak at the age they are expected to but delays in language

development are not uncommon. Expressive language may be perfect with a full command of grammar usually present. Speech may be pedantic, and peculiar voice characteristics such as monotonous tone and loud volume may be present. Sometimes a word or phrase is repeated over and over in a stereotyped fashion. Usually there is a comprehension deficit despite apparent superior verbal skills. Non-verbal communication problems that include limited use of gestures, limited facial expression, poor eye contact, and clumsy body language are common.

(3) Social Behaviour

Restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour, interests and activities are very common in children with AS. The special interests are often abnormal either in intensity or focus so that other activities are excluded. The interests are adhered to in a repetitive way and often rely on rote memory rather than meaning. Repetitive routines may be imposed on themselves and/or others. Children with AS are often resistant to change, coping best when life is predictable and structured. They may often appear non-compliant as they have difficulty taking direction and coping with negative feedback.

Profile of Persons with As: – Children and Adults

Although people with AS may vary strongly in their characteristics, the typical person with Asperger Syndrome may not ‘fit in’ because of eccentric behaviour, peculiar ways of speaking and a lack of social skills.

People with AS may be interested in social relationships but lack the understanding and use of social rules and behaviour, and may communicate inappropriately: eg. ignoring contextual clues such as someone's disinterest in the topic of conversation. They may have difficulty in establishing relationships, may feel rejected and may not understand how their behavioural responses contribute to their isolation.

People with AS may graduate from mainstream schools and obtain a variety of jobs, but they are often disadvantaged by their behaviour and resistance to change.

Older children/adults may withdraw from the uncomfortable interactions which have characterised their early years, and retreat into the safety of their family or other familiar environment.

For further information about AS please visit our website (see below).

➤ www.assnvic.org.au

The following websites may also be of assistance:

➤ www.autism-help.org

➤ www.autismvictoria.org.au

About ASSN Vic.

ASSN Vic was formed by a group of parents in 1991 and is operated by volunteers.

Aims and Objectives:

- Providing avenues for support, such as through group meetings
- Providing relevant information
- Supporting research
- Engaging in community education
- Provision of an AS resource library
- Maintaining links with other Associations

Support Group Meetings / Phone Assistance:

We provide regular support group meetings for people with AS and family / carers (daytime and evenings) and information evenings with key guest speakers on AS and related matters. Details and dates of meetings are published on the ASSN website.

We also have members who volunteer their time to answer your telephone queries. When you contact us, your call will be recorded on message bank and a return call will be made as soon as possible.



Web: www.assnvic.org.au

Address: **54 Railway Rd, Blackburn, Vic 3130**

Email: **admin@assnvic.org.au**

Phone: **(03) 9845 2766**

ABN: **47 066 180 983**

Assoc. No: **A0043862N**

Asperger Syndrome

– Info Sheet –

- **Asperger Syndrome: what is it?**
- **Children and Asperger Syndrome**
- **Support**