

What is Autism?

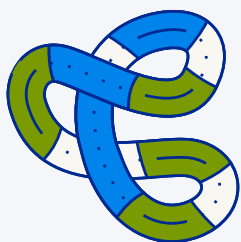
Signs to look for in yourself

Many autistic people are diagnosed in adulthood, often after finding that they have a lot in common with other autistic folks, or after their children are diagnosed. Here are a few signs that you may want to explore a diagnosis for yourself:



You find interacting with others difficult or exhausting, or you feel like you're wearing a mask or playing a character when you talk to people. Other people seem to pick up on social rules and information that you don't have access to, and you sometimes or often seem to be in trouble with friends, family or coworkers for reasons you don't understand.

Sensory input seems more intense for you than for other people. Bright sunlight or loud noises might be physically painful, or the tags in your clothing might be uncomfortable or unbearable. You may hear or smell things that others can't (the buzzing noise that some lights make is a common one). You may also experience some tastes or textures differently to other people - you may have complained that a food was too sweet or too spicy, and been told that you were wrong, it's not sweet/spicy at all.



You might fidget or move around a lot, especially when you're feeling strong emotions. You might flap your hands, rock back and forth, or really like fidget toys (or you might have flapped and rocked as a child, but been told off so much that you no longer do it). You might have less obvious fidgets that people around you won't notice, like curling your toes, or more socially acceptable

ones like twirling your hair or biting your nails. Many autistic adults had more obvious fidgets or stims as children, but were told or forced to stop - most then compensate with a smaller or subtler stim.

Your interests may be deeper and less broad than other people's. You might know an enormous amount about a specific thing (or about a few different areas of interest), and be able to spend hours engaging in your particular passion. It may be difficult for you to stop pursuing your interest and switch to a different task (even a necessary one like eating or sleeping).



If any of this is sounding familiar, it may be worth investigating further. There are a number of online self-assessments you can take, like this one: <https://psychology-tools.com/test/autism-spectrum-quotient>

If you decide you want to pursue a formal diagnosis, talk to your GP or take a look at our diagnosis guide here: <https://autismnz.org.nz/diagnosis-guide/>

You can also contact one of our Outreach Coordinators to talk about what's going on - you can find an Outreach Coordinator in your region here: <https://autismnz.org.nz/support-from-us/>