

What is Autism? *Info for Coaches and Recreation Staff*

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder, more generally referred to as 'autism.' It is referred to as a 'spectrum' disorder because there is a significant variability amongst those who share the diagnosis.

"If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism." — Stephen Shore

Core Features of Autism (DSM V, 2013):

- **Challenges with social-emotional reciprocity:**
Initiating social interactions, maintaining conversation, sharing emotions
- **Challenges with non-verbal communication:**
Reading and using appropriate body language, facial expressions and eye contact
- **Challenges developing and maintaining relationships:**
Making and keeping friends, adjusting behavior to suit different social contexts
- **Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements or use of objects:**
Repetitive play, speech, or use of objects
- **Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal/nonverbal behavior, excessive resistance to change:**
Struggling with changes, repetitive questioning, thriving in routine and ritual
- **Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus:**
Strong interests in particular topics or objects
- **Hypo or hyper reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment:**
Apparent indifference to heat/cold/pain, adverse responses to sounds or textures, etc.

NOTE: Autism may be diagnosed with OR without:

- A) Intellectual disability
- B) Language impairment

Autism Stats and Facts:

- The U.S. Centre for Disease Control (CDC) estimates **1 in 68 children have autism**. This marks a 23% increase since 2009, and a 78% increase since 2007
- Autism is almost 5 times more common among boys. **1 in 42 boys are diagnosed with autism**. (CDC, 2012)
- There are over 11,000 children and youth in British Columbia diagnosed with autism (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2011)
- Approximately 1/3 of individuals with autism are nonverbal
- Approximately one third of individuals with autism have an intellectual disability (Autism Speaks, 2017)

