Autism: GP information sheet

Autism is a lifelong way of experiencing the world. It can shape how a person communicates, connects with others and responds to sensory input. Every autistic person is different, and many bring real strengths, deep interests and a unique way of thinking.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some people, or the people close to them, may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one person to the next.

Communication

- Conversations might feel tiring or confusing
- Words may be taken quite literally
- Some people may prefer writing or texting

Connecting with others

- Social rules might feel unclear
- Friendships may look different
- Time alone could feel restoring

Senses

- Noise, light or textures might feel intense
- Busy places could feel overwhelming
- Some sensations may be sought out and enjoyed

Routines and interests

- Predictable routines may feel calming
- Change might feel unsettling
- Interests can be deep and joyful

For children

- Families might notice different ways of playing
- Some children may communicate in their own way
- Teachers may share similar observations

For adults

- Some adults may only start to wonder about autism later in life
- Many may have learned to mask
- Masking might feel exhausting over time

What the person might be bringing

Some people may have spent years feeling different without knowing why. They might feel tired from fitting in, or unsure how their experiences will be received. Parents may arrive with a mix of hope, worry and questions.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel safer to talk. Feeling heard can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs already do well

Opening gently

GPs are often the first person someone feels able to talk to. A gentle opening can help people share things they may not have said out loud before.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes their family, over many years. That wider view of someone's life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

As people explore their options, the GP can remain a familiar, steady presence, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of someone's health and wellbeing, which can help people feel understood.

What psychology may offer

Understanding

- Time to make sense of experiences
- A thorough assessment, where the person would like one
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- Space to talk about stress or worry

Practical and family support

- Ideas for managing sensory needs and change
- Support with school, study or work
- Support for parents, carers and families
- Working with schools, where the family wishes

Everyday things some people find helpful

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Quiet spaces to recharge
- Predictable routines and visual plans
- Headphones or other sensory supports
- Time for favourite interests
- Clear, direct communication
- Connecting with autistic communities

Trusted Australian resources

Autism Awareness Australia autismawareness.com.au

Amaze amaze.org.au

Raising Children Network raisingchildren.net.au

Referring to Strategic Psychology

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.