



## Autism Spectrum Disorder

### Why in news?

On World Autism Day (April 2), there should be focus not only on raising awareness of the illness but also on the importance of providing a positive and supportive environment.

### What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

*Autism affects 18 million people in India. ASD affects approximately 1% to 1.5% of children aged 2 to 9 years.*

- **About** - Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a collection of disorders defined by issues such as social interaction and communication difficulties.
- People with ASD may behave, communicate, interact, and learn in ways that are different from most other people.
- **Cause** - It is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.
- It has environmental and genetic causes.
- **Fragile X Syndrome (FXS)** is the leading inherited cause of autism in 4% of the global population.
- **Transmission** -It is transmitted genetically for some people.
- **Symptom** -People with ASD often have problems with social communication, interaction and restricted or repetitive behaviors.
- People with ASD may also have different ways of learning, moving, or paying attention.
- **Diagnosis** -There is no medical test such as blood test to diagnose the disorder.
- ASD can sometimes be detected at 18 months of age or younger.
- **Treatment** -There is ***no cure*** for autism.
- Treatments for ASD seek to reduce symptoms that interfere with daily functioning and quality of life.
- Treatment plans usually involve multiple professionals and are catered to the individual.



### What are the challenges?

- Low awareness
- Lack of basic services
- Poor diagnosis
- No national programme on autism
- Lack of systematic estimates
- Lack of central medical registry
- Cultural differences in who gets a clinical diagnosis of autism
- No medical insurance coverage for autism
- Variances in the availability of psychiatrists (less than 10,000 psychiatrists are available in India)

### What measures can be taken?

- **Need for an all-India programme** - A national programme needs 3 essential components - assessment, intervention, and awareness.
- **Non-specialists** -Non-specialist workforce (Accredited Social Health Activist /Anganwadi workers, parents/caregivers) and appropriate digital technology can be used to widen the reach.
- **Early intervention** - Simple behavioral interventions that parents/caregivers can be trained on that can have a positive impact.
- **Creation of linkage** -Researchers, clinicians, service providers can be linked to the end-users in the autism community in India.
- **Public awareness** -Can serve to reduce stigma associated with autism and related conditions.
- **Private sector** - Partnership with the private sector would also be vital to take survey and support the victims.

### References

1. [The Hindu | Autism](#)
2. [Economic Times |Status of Autism in India](#)



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