

The Year of
Safety

"Safety is
Everyone's
Responsibility"

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Autism Awareness 1
Month Basics

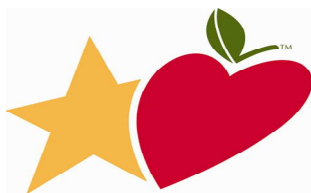
Autism Safety and
Treatment & 2
Education

Newsletter by
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Dates to Remember

April is Autism Awareness

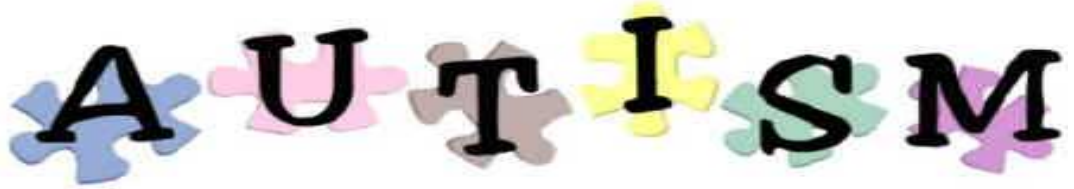
www.safekids.org for recall
information



EARLY LEARNING
COALITION
OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

"Nurturing the young children
of Southwest Florida and
those who care for them".

Injury Prevention



April is Autism Awareness Month

Understanding Autism: Autism is a lifelong neurological disability that affects a person's ability to communicate, understand language, play, and socially interact with others. The first signs of autism usually appear as developmental delays before age three. Autism is classified as a developmental disability because it interferes with the typical rate and patterns of childhood development. There are diagnoses closely related to autism such as PDD-NOS (Pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified), Asperger's Disorder, and Rett's Disorder that are included in the category of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Characteristics: Every person with autism is different. However, there are some common characteristics of individuals with autism that may occur. Remember that although these are some common characteristics, no two persons with autism experience the world or behave in the same way.

- Difficulty in using and understanding language
- Challenges with navigating social situations and unusual play with toys
- Over or under sensitivity to sound, sight, taste, touch, or smell
- Repetitive behaviors such as spinning objects or rocking
- Difficulty with changes to surroundings or routines
- Certain behaviors exhibited to stimulate the senses such as switching a light on and off repeatedly, or humming loudly
- Uneven skill development; some skills are normal or superior for their age while others show significant delay
- Challenging behaviors such as aggression, self injury or severe withdrawal

Causes: Nobody knows what causes autism. Some scientists believe there is a biological cause that affects the working of the brain, but this has not been proven. It is possible there are many factors that could interact with one another which could cause different characteristics in each individual with autism. Researchers are working hard to find the cause (s) for autism. Parents do not cause autism. No factors in a child's experiences or in parenting styles are responsible for autism.

Facts: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Autism Spectrum Disorder occurs in about 1 of every 150 births, and is four times more often in boys than girls. Families of all racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds anywhere in the world are affected. Autism occurs by itself, with intellectual disability, mental health issues, or with other health problems, such as epilepsy, viral infections, or changes in a person's growth rate metabolism.

This information is by the Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) at the University of South Florida. CARD provides support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism and related disabilities.

Autism "Spectrum" Disorders (ASDs):

- Autism
- Asperger Syndrome
- Rett's Disorder
- PDD - NOS
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder



Safety and Autism

Safety is one of the most important topics we can talk about to parents and child care providers. This news letter was designed to decrease the chances of injuries in child care and at home, by providing information that is practical and useful. We strive to provide updated information and will also refer you to credible web-sites for further resources.

Children who have Autism or those who are on the "spectrum" will have a different way to communicate with providers. With that being said, in a disaster or emergency situation, communicating with these children will be difficult. Plan and practice with all of the children for an event where you will be giving specific instructions to them. Just because a child on the spectrum does not speak, does not mean they can not hear.

"It is important to remember that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can get sick or injured just like children without ASD. Regular medical and dental exams should be a part of a child's intervention plan. Often it is hard to tell if a child's behavior is related to the ASD or it is caused by a separate health condition. For instance, head banging could be a symptom of the ASD, or it could be a sign that the child is having headaches. In those cases, a thorough physical exam is needed". (www.cdc.gov/ncddd/autism/treatment)



Self-injurious behavior is one of the most devastating behaviors exhibited by people with developmental disabilities. The most common forms of these behaviors include: head-banging, hand-biting, and excessive self-rubbing and scratching. There are many possible reasons why a person may engage in self-injurious behavior, ranging from biochemical to the social environment. There are many of the causes of self-injury behavior based on the underlying cause.

It may be in response to pain, frustration, sensory issues, avoidance or escape from something or an activity, social attention, communication, to obtain tangibles, seizures, arousal, genetic reasons.

Information from www.autism.com/families/problems/selfinjury.htm



AUTISM SPEAKS™
It's time to listen.

Treatments & Educational needs with Autism

Treatment and educational needs for people with autism are related disabilities should include:

- **Early and accurate diagnosis.** This increases the child's opportunity for positive development and success
- **Professional Services.** These may include speech, occupational and behavioral therapy and require a cooperative effort between professionals and families.
- **Individualized supports in typical settings:** Generally, persons with autism seem to make the best progress when they're in as many typical settings as possible and provided with individualized support and therapy to meet their needs.
- **By implementing best practices** in all areas of life, progress in persons with autism can be optimized.

For more information on Autism:

- CARD at <http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu>
- Autism Speaks at <http://card-usf.fmhi.usf.edu>
- Autism Society of America at www.autism-society.org
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at www.nichd.nih.gov
- CDC at www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly
- American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org/healthtopics/autism.cfm

