

April 2010

## Autism Spectrum Disorders

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a group of [developmental disabilities](#) that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. People with ASDs handle information in their brain differently than other people.

ASDs are "spectrum disorders." That means ASDs affect each person in different ways, and can range from very mild to severe. People with ASDs share some similar symptoms, such as problems with social interaction. But there are differences in when the symptoms start, how severe they are, and the exact nature of the symptoms.

ASDs begin before the age of 3 and last throughout a person's life, although symptoms may improve over time. Some children with an ASD show hints of future problems within the first few months of life. In others, symptoms might not show up until 24 months or later. Some children with an ASD seem to develop normally until around 18 to 24 months of age and then they stop gaining new skills, or they lose the skills they once had.

A person with an ASD might:

- Not respond to their name by 12 months
- Not point at objects to show interest (point at an airplane flying over) by 14 months
- Not play "pretend" games (pretend to "feed" a doll) by 18 months
- Avoid eye contact and want to be alone and get upset by minor changes
- Have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings
- Have delayed speech and language skills
- Repeat words or phrases over and over (echolalia)
- Give unrelated answers to questions
- Have obsessive interests
- Flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles
- Have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel

We do not know all of the causes of ASDs. However, we have learned that there are likely many causes for multiple types of ASDs. There may be many different factors that make a child more likely to have an ASD, including environmental, biologic and genetic factors. Most scientists agree that [genes](#) are one of the risk factors that can make a person more likely to develop an ASD. Children who have a sibling or parent with an ASD are at a higher risk of also having an ASD. ASDs tend to occur more often in people who have certain other medical conditions. About 10% of children with an ASD have an identifiable genetic disorder, such as Fragile X syndrome, [tuberous sclerosis](#), Down syndrome and other chromosomal disorders. Some harmful drugs taken during pregnancy have been linked with a higher risk of ASDs, for example, the prescription drugs [thalidomide](#) and valproic acid.

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### MISSION STATEMENT

*"The mission of the Otsego County Public Health Department is to respond to the public health challenges in a changing environment. We employ current public health knowledge and best practices to control disease, prevent injuries, promote and encourage healthy behaviors and assure the accessibility of quality health services. We partner with the state health department, county health departments, local health care providers, community organizations and the residents of Otsego County in building a healthier and safer community."*

## National Public Health Week

**Imagine other countries looking to the U.S. as a model of health. A place where everyone has access to health care and services, where we're celebrated for embracing healthy lifestyles, and our communities and neighborhoods make it easy for us to make healthy choices. We can make a difference.**

If every one of us commits to promoting good health in our communities, we can create a ripple effect from coast to coast. Through just one neighborhood that makes its public parks accessible, one municipality that launches a bike-helmet safety program, one group of people who join together to bring fresh foods to school, or one health center that offers a vaccination program, we can create a collage of public health successes across the country.

Block by block, let's find these small changes and make them today in our communities. The only way to become a healthier nation is to create healthier communities.

April 5-11 is National Public Health Week. In its commitment to contribute to making this the healthiest nation in one generation, Otsego County Public Health will be at The Fox Care Center on April 6th and 7th, 2010 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Come and explore all that Public Health has to offer to help you be part of a healthier nation and community. Information will be available on: Lead, STD's, Diabetes, Radon, Cancer, Family Planning Education Service, Car Seats, Bicycle Helmets, Rabies, Early Intervention, Nutrition, Maternal Child Health, PCA program, Dental, Immunizations and more.

For more information call 547-4230.

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## Lead Poisoning Prevention Renovation, Repair and Painting Program Rule

As of April 22, 2010, a new rule issued by the EPA goes into effect requiring the use of lead-safe practices and other actions aimed at preventing lead poisoning. Under the rule, contractors performing renovation, repair and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in homes, child care facilities, and schools built before 1978 must be certified and must follow specific work practices to prevent lead contamination.

The rule will affect paid renovators who work in pre-1978 housing and child-occupied facilities, including:

- Renovation contractors
- Maintenance workers in multi-family housing
- Painters and other specialty trades.

Under the rule, child-occupied facilities are defined as residential, public or commercial buildings where children under age six are present on a regular basis or where a pregnant woman resides. The requirements apply to renovation, repair or painting activities. The rule does not apply to minor maintenance or repair activities where less than six square feet of lead-based paint is disturbed in a room or where less than 20 square feet of lead-based paint is disturbed on the exterior.



**Lead gets into the body when it is swallowed or breathed.** People, especially children, can swallow lead dust as they eat, play, and perform other ordinary hand-to-mouth activities. People may also breathe in lead dust or fumes while they work on jobs that sand, scrape, burn, brush, blast or otherwise disturb painted surfaces that contain lead paint. Additionally, pets may be poisoned by the same types of exposure to lead.

**Once in the body, lead can have significant effects on human health.** In children, lead poisoning damages the nervous system and causes developmental and behavioral problems that can affect them for their lifetime. In adults, lead poisoning causes health and reproductive problems. Pregnant women are especially vulnerable to the effects of lead.

Contractors who perform renovation, repairs, and painting jobs in pre-1978 housing and child-occupied facilities must, before beginning work, provide owners, tenants, and child-care facilities with a copy of EPA's lead hazard information pamphlet [Renovate Right: Important Lead Hazard Information for Families, Child Care Providers, and Schools \(PDF\)](#)

The RRP rule affects contractors, property managers and others who disturb known or presumed lead-based paint during renovation. The term renovation covers all activities done for compensation that disturb painted surfaces including most repair, remodeling and maintenance activities, such as window replacement, weatherization and demolition. Those affected by the RRP rule should read the complete rule, which is available on EPA's Web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm>.

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We know that the once common belief that poor parenting practices cause ASDs is not true. There is some evidence that the critical period for developing ASDs occurs before birth. However, concerns about vaccines and infections have led researchers to consider risk factors before and after birth.

There is currently no cure for ASDs. However, research shows that early intervention treatment services can greatly improve a child's development. Early intervention services help children from birth to 3 years old (36 months) learn important skills. Services can include therapy to help the child talk, walk, and interact with others. Therefore, it is important to talk to your child's doctor as soon as possible if you think your child has an ASD or other developmental problem.

Even if your child has not been diagnosed with an ASD, he or she may be eligible for early intervention treatment services. The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) says that children under the age of 3 years (36 months) who are at risk of having developmental delays may be eligible for services. These services are provided through an early intervention system in your state. Through this system, you can ask for an evaluation.

In addition, treatment for particular symptoms, such as speech therapy for language delays, often does not need to wait for a formal ASD diagnosis.

You can find the right contact information for your state by calling the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) at 1-800-695-0285. Residents of Otsego County can call Otsego County Children With Special Needs at 607-547-6474

Source: CDC [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/facts.html)



### UPCOMING HEALTH EVENTS

**Immunization Clinics:** You must pre-register prior to the clinic date. Call 547-4230. Children receiving immunizations must bring shot records.

All immunization clinics are 1:00 to 3:00 pm.

- 04/05/10 Oneonta Clinic
- 04/12/10 Cooperstown
- 04/19/10 Oneonta Clinic
- 04/26/10 Cooperstown

### Blood Pressure Clinics:

- 04/13/10 11:00-12:00 Richfield Springs Vets Club
- 04/21/10 2:30-3:30 Nader Towers Wellness Center
- 04/21/10 11:00-12:00 Elm Park Church Senior Meals
- 04/21/10 11:00-12:00 New Lisbon Senior Meals

**Free Rabies Clinics:** All pets must be controlled by their owner. Dogs should be on a leash, cats and ferrets should be in a pillow case or carrying case

- 04/06/10 6:00 pm-8:00 pm Worcester Town Barn
- 04/22/10 6:00 pm-8:00 pm Richfield Town Barn

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