

Well-Checks & Autism Spectrum Disorder

Well-check visits are an important time for you and your doctor to discuss your baby's growth and development. During these visits, your doctor completes developmental monitoring, which involves several questions and observations of your baby playing, speaking, and moving, in order to identify any potential developmental delays. Your doctor typically completes developmental monitoring at 9, 18, 24/30 month well-check visits.

If any concerns are noted, your doctor will likely refer you to a specialist who can provide a more comprehensive screening or assessment. These specialists are typically Developmental Pediatricians or Child Psychologists who have training and expertise with child development and neurodevelopmental disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Approximately 1 in 54 children are identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). This neurodevelopmental disorder causes changes in brain development that affects social skills, communication, and other behaviors. It is 5 times more common among boys and does not discriminate across ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic groups (CDC, 2020). Some children with Autism Spectrum Disorder are also identified as having a genetic or chromosomal disorder while others may display above average cognitive abilities.

Identification and Early Intervention for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder is imperative. Children can be diagnosed as early as two years old but screenings and treatment can begin earlier. Although there currently is no cure, research has shown that Early Intervention services provided by qualified professionals can improve your baby's development and reduce symptoms associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



Warning signs for Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Delays in language and communication skills

- Lack of or limited use of verbal communication
- Does not appear to use gestures such as pointing/waving "Hello"
- Repeatedly uses the same words or phrases

Impairments in social interactions

- Poor eye contact
- Appears to enjoy playing alone rather than with others
- Does not respond to their name being called
- Uses facial expressions that may not be appropriate to the context

Restricted interests or unusual behaviors

- Unusual preoccupation with a certain topics or toys
- Hand flapping, body rocking, spinning
- Follows certain rules or routines and may become distressed if disrupted

If you have any concerns or questions about your child's development, please speak to your doctor immediately. It is important that infants at risk be identified as early as possible so they can get the help they need to meet their full potential. Those children who experience developmental delays may show a wide range of problematic behaviors or difficulties. Screenings and comprehensive diagnostic evaluations can lead to a better understanding the child's needs, strengths, and limitations.



Please contact Dr. Rebecca's Child and Family Psychological Services for more information.