



# What does ASD look like?



Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is the name for a group of conditions where a person has a delay or difficulty in **three** developmental areas. Many children have some delay in one of these areas, but a child or adult with ASD has difficulty in all three areas. For example, they might:

Communication	Social interaction	Thinking (cognition) or behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be delayed in developing communication or language</li><li>• have unusual ways of making themselves understood (may use objects or another person's hand to indicate what s/he wants)</li><li>• find difficulty in understanding others (can sometimes appear to ignore or not to hear)</li><li>• use language in an unusual way (monotone voice, copy or echo what others say, use overly formal or academic language).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not join in with play or social opportunities</li><li>• prefer to do things alone</li><li>• not respond to other people's greetings, smiles or waves</li><li>• not show toys, objects or share their interests with other people</li><li>• have difficulty with social situations, conversation or social rules.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• need unusual rituals or routines (such as lining things up, completing tasks in a particular pattern, shutting doors etc)</li><li>• get very upset when moving from one task or place to another or when routines are interrupted</li><li>• make unusual movements near their eyes or face</li><li>• over-react to loud noises or be very sensitive to particular smells, tastes or textures</li><li>• have poor problem-solving or organisation skills</li><li>• have a strong interest which s/he likes to talk about and takes up a lot of time</li><li>• have poor coordination or motor skills.</li></ul>

ASD shows up differently with each individual depending on their age, gender, personality, family and cultural circumstances, severity and intellectual ability.

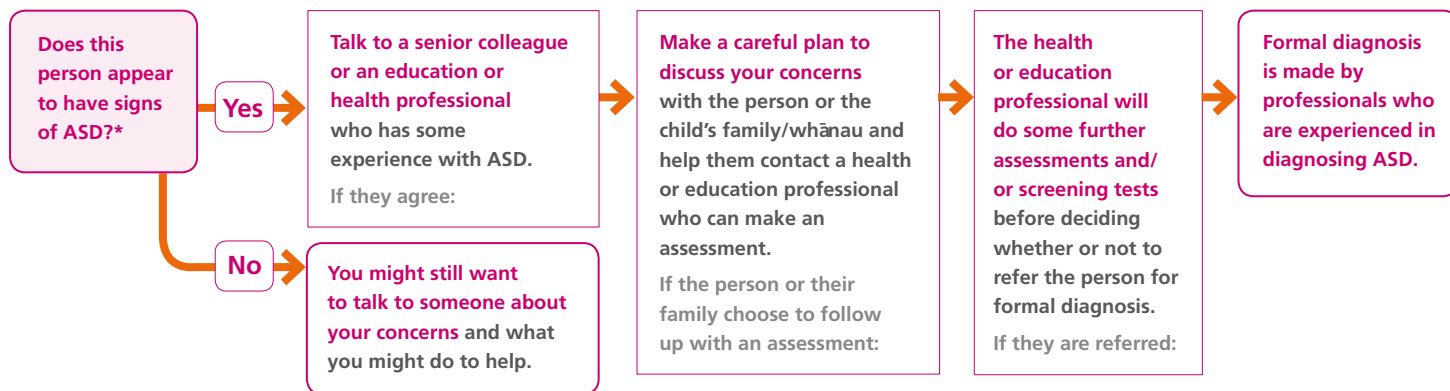
More information at: [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)



## What do I do if I suspect ASD?

Judging whether someone may have ASD and deciding whether to discuss this with them and/or their family/whānau requires expertise and may involve more than one contact with the person. The process is summarised below.

The path to a diagnosis



\* You should not refer someone without their informed consent.

During assessment and/or diagnosis families may be able to access some supporting information, resources, education, respite, and other professional advice and services.

**Regardless of age at assessment/diagnosis, it is never too late for people with ASD to benefit from well-designed strategies and interventions.**

More information at: [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

This Quick Card is based on a summary e-booklet drawn from 'New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guideline' (NZ ASD Guideline) called 'What does ASD look like?' Order copies free by phoning 04 496 2277; Order no. HP5055. All guideline resources are available at [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

ISBN (print): 978-1-877509-26-1; ISBN (electronic): 978-1-877509-27-8  
This resource has been funded by the Ministries of Health and Education.

