



I have potential.

## Did you know ...

### Autism is not a mental illness

There are no known psychological factors that have been shown to cause autism, nor is it the result of bad parenting.

Children, teens and adults with autism do not intentionally behave inappropriately. Instead, they are often not aware of the implications of their actions, placing them at risk of misunderstanding, intolerance, and even compromised personal safety.

- Autism is found throughout the world in families of all racial, ethnic, social, educational and economic backgrounds.
- According to Canadian researchers, the current prevalence rate of autism is 1 in 165 (*Fombonne E. The prevalence of autism. JAMA 2003; 289(1): 1-3.*). It is estimated there are as many as 80,000 individuals in Ontario affected by autism.
- The ratio of males to females who have the disorder is 4:1.
- Autism is more prevalent than Down Syndrome, childhood Cancer, Cystic Fibrosis or Multiple Sclerosis.

## Our Mission

*Together with the collective efforts of Autism Ontario (formerly known as Autism Society Ontario), our mission is to provide information, support and friendship to families and community members dealing with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in Durham Region; to assist in educating society about autism and the fact that it is a disability; and to help ensure that every individual with autism is given all the opportunities and resources needed to achieve his or her full potential in our community.*



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## You Can Get Involved

- Become a Member of Autism Ontario - Durham Region
- Volunteer
- Make a tax deductible donation

### AutismONTARIO - Durham Region

**Website:** [www.autismontario.com/durham](http://www.autismontario.com/durham)

**Toll Free Phone/Fax:** 1-866-495-4680

**Email:** [durham@autismontario.com](mailto:durham@autismontario.com)

**Office:** 21980 Highway 12, Sunderland, ON L0C 1H0

**Charitable Registration No.:** 11924 8789 RR0001



**Autism**ONTARIO  
Durham Region

## What is Autism?

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**Autism** is a complex developmental disability that usually becomes apparent during the first three years of life, and is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain.

Autism is part of a family of disorders called Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), which is one of several Pervasive Developmental Disorders, including:

- Asperger Syndrome
- PDD-NOS (pervasive developmental disorder—not otherwise specified)

No two people experience autism in precisely the same way; every individual with autism will show characteristics of the disorder in varying degrees. However, all individuals with autism experience difficulties—from mild to severe—with verbal and non-verbal communication, social interaction, and leisure or play activities.



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## Facts About Autism

### What causes autism?

Researchers all over the world are searching for the answer to this question, while trying to find an explanation for the various forms and severity of autism.

Current research links autism to biological or neurological differences in the brain. In many families there appears to be a pattern of autism or related disabilities which suggests there is a genetic basis to the disorder. Researchers believe the genetic basis is highly complex, probably involving several genes in combination.

### Is there a cure for autism?

There is no cure for the differences in the brain which result in autism; however, there is treatment to improve the quality of life. With appropriate intervention, many of the associated characteristics of autism can improve. For some people affected by autism, the improvement may even reach the point where they appear to no longer have autism, but the majority of individuals will continue to exhibit manifestations of autism for life.



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### What does autism look like?

Autism is not a visible disability, although individuals affected by the disorder may display a few or all of the following characteristics and behaviours:

- Delays in understanding or using verbal language, or lack of speech
- Repeated body movements, such as rocking, spinning or hand flapping
- Unusual or extreme responses to sensory stimulation (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell)
- Resistance to change and insistence on routines, often resulting in tantrums
- Difficulties with social interaction
- Complete aversion to eye contact, or difficulty sustaining eye contact
- Impaired muscle coordination, often causing clumsiness or awkward gait
- Challenges with food or eating, which may include limited or unusual food preferences and difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Extremes of behaviour: the individual may be hyperactive and exhibit aggression, or may seem calm and be overly passive