



Autism: Myths, Mysteries, Facts

April is "Autism Awareness Month." Here are some frequently asked questions and answers about autism:

•**What is autism?** Autism is a developmental disability that usually appears during a child's first three years of life. It is part of a group of disorders called Autism Spectrum Disorders. Recent statistics show that out of every 150 births, one child may develop some form of autism.

•**What causes autism?** One current theory is that autism may be the result of neurological or biochemical factors affecting the functioning of the brain. Autism is neither a psychological disorder nor the result of "bad parenting."

•**What are the symptoms?** The types and degree of manifestations of autism can vary greatly from person to person, including difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication, social interaction, and leisure/play activities. Some people may simply seem shy, while others may have more severe behavioral symptoms.

•**Is autism treatable?** There is no known cure right now but doctors, scientists and educators are learning more about autism, and there are a growing number of programs to treat symptoms. Educational, self-help, and other focused interventions help people with autism to learn and thrive.

Because the effects of autism can be so unique in each individual, a treatment that works for one person may not work for someone else, and vice versa. It's critical for parents and doctors to be **aware** so they can identify possible signs of autism **early**, find support and resources, and search out appropriate strategies for their **own child's situation**.

•**What resources are there for families with autistic children?** For the parents of an autistic child, day-to-day life is often stressful and challenging. However, there are growing resources for understanding and dealing with autism.

Visit the web site of the Autism Society of America (ASA) at www.autism-society.org. Also, call Work & Family Benefits to find out about schools, summer camps, and other programs for children and families affected by autism. **At WFB – we're always ready to help!**

