



Autism - Fact Sheet

What is autism?

Autism is a developmental disability related to social communication and behavioral differences. Autism features can be very different from person to person and can change over time

How many children are affected?

About **1 in 31 children (~3.2%)** have autism in the United States. Males are about 3 times more likely than females to be diagnosed.

What critical programs ensure care?

- **Medicaid** supports health and mental health care for about half of all children with special healthcare needs like autism.
- **Public schools** provide critical educational supports via the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and accommodations through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- **The Autism CARES Act** ensures research funding and professional workforce support focused on improving the lives of autistic people.

What does the evidence say?

- **Vaccines do not cause autism.** Millions of dollars have already been spent on high quality studies to investigate this concern, and the evidence is clear.
- The primary reason for the increase in autism diagnoses is because the **definition of autism has widened over time and more people now have access to evaluations.**
- **Public investments in timely identification and support pay off.** Giving children the support they need helps them reach their full potential, reduces long term healthcare costs, and improves health outcomes.

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