

# Warning Signs of Autism in Children



**Children's**<sup>SM</sup>  
Healthcare of Atlanta

## What are the warning signs of autism in children?

Novice and seasoned parents alike are increasingly vigilant about their children's development. While some children meet motor, language, and social milestones according to schedule, others are slow to demonstrate the skills that parents anticipate. Sometimes, there is a fine line between children who are developing normally, and children who are exhibiting developmental delays. The cause of autism is not yet known and it affects each child differently. Some children are mildly affected, while others experience severe symptoms. Therefore, autism is considered to be a spectrum of disorders.

According to the CDC, currently, 1 in 110 children is diagnosed with autism. Identifying 1 in 70 males, boys are four times more likely than girls to be on the autism spectrum. Despite the strides that geneticists have made in identifying genetic markers, there is no medical "test" for autism. Diagnoses are based on the presence or absence of behaviors as reported by parents and observed by clinicians.

During clinical interviews, many parents report that they were concerned early on about their child. Often, they were encouraged to wait for the child's skills to improve with time. What should parents be looking for? There are a few "red flags," related to the absence or limited use of certain critical skills. Some examples of warning signs parents should look for are:

- Not using social smiles or joyful expressions by six months or eye contact when their name is called by twelve months
- Not using back-and-forth sharing of sounds, facial expressions or face-to-face play by nine months
- Not using gestures, such as pointing, showing, reaching, or waving or playing social games by 12 months
- Not using independent two-word meaningful phrases by 24 months and not following 2-to-3 step directions at three years.
- Presenting a loss of speech, babbling or social skills at any age

For more information, please visit [www.marcus.org](http://www.marcus.org).

### About Tips Provider:

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, a not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to making kids better today and healthier tomorrow. Our specialized care helps children get better faster and live healthier lives. Managing more than 850,000 patient visits annually at three hospitals and 24 neighborhood locations, Children's is the largest healthcare provider for children in Georgia and one of the largest pediatric clinical care providers in the country. Children's offers access to more than 60 pediatric specialties and programs and is ranked among the top children's hospitals in the country by U.S. News & World Report. With generous philanthropic and volunteer support, Children's has impacted the lives of children in Georgia, the United States and throughout the world. Visit [www.choa.org](http://www.choa.org) for more information.