

I'M AUTISTIC?

What is Autism?

Autism is a neurological disability. Being autistic does not mean you have an illness or disease. It just means your brain works in a different way from other people. You might find some things really easy, or really hard.

It's something that you're born with. Signs of autism might be noticed when you're very young, or not until you're older.

Autism is not a medical condition with treatments or a "cure". But some people need support to help them with certain things - this is different for everyone.

There are 700 thousand autistic people in the UK! That's more than 1 in 100 people. If you include their families, Autism is a part of daily life for 2.8 million people. You are not the only one!



What does it mean for me?

Having autism means that you may see and understand the world differently to people around you, and you might have difficulties with making and keeping friendships or relationships. You may also find it hard to have conversations with others, or know when you should be talking.

You may also have specific and very strong interests, have extreme reactions to sensory input like smells, touch, taste or sounds, and may also find change or unfamiliar situations difficult and overwhelming.

Is that why?

- You might find it hard to look at people when they are talking to you.
- You might cover your ears or find loud noises upsetting.
- You might find it hard to say how you are feeling.
- You 'stim'. This could be fidgeting, moving your hands when you are excited/happy or jumping. There are lots of ways to stim, it's ok to do it.



What does Autism look like?

Autism looks different in every person. Not one person with Autism is the same!

Some autistic people don't talk very much, but some autistic people talk loads. It all depends on how your brain is!

Autism is a little bit different in boys and girls. It's much harder for doctors to tell when girls have Autism, as girls often do something called **'masking'**. This means that they have learnt how to act and speak in certain situations just from watching others, and hide how they are truly feeling. Masking takes up lots of energy, and may mean that you get angry or upset really quickly over small things. This is super tiring - some boys do it too!

You can't catch autism. It's something that is usually passed on in your genetics, by your parents - but this is not always the case. You won't always have an autistic parent.

Famous people with Autism!

Lots of people have Autism. Some people call it 'Aspergers' but this term isn't used very much in 2024.

Some important people in history and celebrities who have autism are:

- **Lionel Messi** - Footballer
- **Eminem** - Rapper
- **Tim Burton** - Film maker
- **Albert Einstein** - Scientist
- **Elon Musk** - Entrepreneur
- **Greta Thunberg** - Global Activist
- **Chloe Hayden** - Actress and Author

It is important to know that you can be autistic and have a really successful job and life. It might just be a little more difficult for you, and might take a little more time to get there.

