What is autism?

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. We know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, most influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently.

- Autism affects an estimated 1 in 59 children in the U.S.
- Autism can be reliably diagnosed by around age 2 but average age remains 4.
- Only 2% of autism research* funding went to the study of life span issues.
- Around 1/3 of people with autism are nonverbal.
- On average, it costs an added $60K/year to care for someone with autism.
- An estimated 70K teens age out of school-based services each year.
- Nearly 1/2 of those with autism wander or bolt from safety.
- More than 1/2 of children with autism have sleep challenges.
- Autism affects more than 70M people worldwide.
- Children with autism are 8x more likely to have GI problems.
- Autism’s economic cost in the U.S. is estimated to be at least $268 B.
- Nearly 1/2 of 25 year olds with autism never held a paying job, although many are willing and able to work.

*Most recent data, 2016