

CMMHC WELLNESS BULLETIN

April 2019

April is Autism Awareness Month!

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. According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects an estimated 1 in 59 children in the United States today.

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.

Several factors may influence the development of autism, and it is often accompanied by sensory sensitivities and medical issues such as gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, seizures or sleep disorders, as well as mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression and attention issues.

[Indicators of autism](#) usually appear by age 2 or 3. Some associated development delays can appear even earlier, and often, it can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Research shows that early intervention leads to positive outcomes later in life for people with autism.

Autism's core symptoms are:

- **social communication challenges** *and*
- **restricted, repetitive behaviors.**

In autism, these symptoms

- **begin in early childhood** (though they may go unrecognized)
- **persist** *and*
- **interfere with daily living.**

Specialized healthcare providers diagnose autism using [a checklist of criteria](#) in the two categories above. They also assess **symptom severity**. Autism's severity scale reflects how much support a person needs for daily function.

Many people with autism have [sensory issues](#). These typically involve over- or under-sensitivities to sounds, lights, touch, tastes, smells, pain and other stimuli.

Autism is also associated with high rates of certain **physical and mental health conditions**.

Social communication challenges

Children and adults with autism have **difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication**. For example, they may not understand or appropriately use:

- Spoken language (around a third of people with autism are nonverbal)
- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice

Expressions not meant to be taken literally

Additional social challenges can include difficulty with:

- Recognizing emotions and intentions in others
- Recognizing one's own emotions
- Expressing emotions
- Seeking emotional comfort from others
- Feeling overwhelmed in social situations
- Taking turns in conversation
- Gauging personal space (appropriate distance between people)

Restricted and repetitive behaviors

Restricted and repetitive behaviors vary greatly across the autism spectrum. They can include:

- Repetitive body movements (e.g. rocking, flapping, spinning, running back and forth)
- Repetitive motions with objects (e.g. spinning wheels, shaking sticks, flipping levers)
- Staring at lights or spinning objects
- Ritualistic behaviors (e.g. lining up objects, repeatedly touching objects in a set order)
- Narrow or extreme interests in specific topics

Need for unvarying routine/resistance to change (e.g. same daily schedule, meal menu, clothes, route to school)

above- information from www.autismspeaks.org

Put on the Puzzle! The Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon is the most recognized symbol of the autism community in the world. Show your support for people with autism by wearing the Autism Awareness Puzzle Ribbon – as a pin on your shirt, a magnet on your car, a badge on your blog, or even your Facebook profile picture – and educate folks on the potential of people with autism! – From www.autism-society.org





APRIL IS NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

is a range of conditions affecting social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication.

APRIL IS NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH,

with celebrations to understand this disorder. Here are some facts to learn what autism is and how you can help those who have it.

AWARENESS

- Most obvious signs of autism appear between two and three years old.
- Children may fail to respond to their name or have a reduced interest in people.
- Around one third of people with autism stay nonverbal their whole life.
- Seizures, ADHD, and anxiety frequently accompany autism.



ACTION

- Developmental delay screenings should occur at nine months.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder screenings should be at 18 months.
- Child psychologists and neurologists can help detect autism in your child.

INCLUSION & ACCEPTANCE

- Children with Autism don't get the same sense of inclusion in schools as other children, making them feel excluded and alienated.
- Adults with autism often have trouble getting a job.
- Social inclusion is having access to education, health care, and services.
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states those with autism have the right to be included in their community.



USE THE HASHTAG **#LIGHTITUPBLUE** ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA platforms to share your experiences and help light the world in blue this April!



Autism: the positives



Understanding, embracing and celebrating different ways of thinking and doing can release the true power of the autistic mind. Here we look at the positive features of autism.



Attention to detail

- Thoroughness
- Accuracy



Methodical approach

- Analytical
- Spotting patterns, repetition



Deep focus

- Concentration
- Freedom from distraction



Novel approaches

- Unique thought processes
- Innovative solutions



Observational skills

- Listen, look, learn approach
- Fact finding



Creativity

- Distinctive imagination
- Expression of ideas



Absorb and retain facts

- Excellent long term memory
- Superior recall



Tenacity and resilience

- Determination
- Challenge opinions



Visual skills

- Visual learning and recall
- Detail-focussed



Accepting of difference

- Less likely to judge others
- May question norms



Expertise

- In-depth knowledge
- High level of skills



Integrity

- Honesty, loyalty
- Commitment

Remember

Every experience of autism is **unique**. No one person will identify with every positive feature of autism. We all have **individual** skills, attributes and characteristics that are as unique as our personalities – this is the **power of neurodiversity**.

Recipe:

Some research encourages gluten and casein free diets for people with autism. Therefore, the recipe below is both gluten and casein free ☺

Lisa's Pear Rice Muffins – GFCFSF

- 1 3/4 cup rice flour
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1 3/4 cup water
- 2 “Whites Only” or 2 eggs (or equivalent egg replacer!)
- 1/2 cup safflower oil
- 2 cup Beechnut Baby Rice Cereal
- 1 tbsp. + 2 tsp. GF baking powder
- 16 oz. Gerber Pears
- 1 tsp. Flaxseed Powder
- Optional: 1 can of pears – cut into small pieces



Rice day muffins: Mix in all ingredients thoroughly. Bake 400 degrees until golden- approximately 20-25 minutes. NOTE: These can appear to be a bit goey – but they should be fine! These are best frozen right away or let cool before eating!

Source: www.tacanow.org

UPCOMING
EVENTS★

- **CSP fundraiser:** Monticello Pizza Ranch May 13th from 5pm-8pm
- **10th Annual Disabilities Resource Fair:** Saturday May 4th at Monticello High School 8:30am-3:30pm
- **The Need for Addressing Tobacco in Behavioral Health Training:** May 2nd (2 sessions available) 9am-11am or 12pm-2pm at Atwood Memorial Center on SCSU Campus in the Cascade Room
- **WHAM—Whole Health Action Management:** April 16th & 17th from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
- **Mental Health Awareness Month:** All of May. CMMHC will be celebrating May 20th—24th

