

Red Flags

The following red flags may indicate a child is at risk for an autism spectrum disorder, and is in need of an immediate evaluation.

In clinical terms, there are a few “absolute indicators,” often referred to as “red flags,” that indicate that a child should be evaluated. For a parent, these are the “red flags” that your child should be screened to ensure that he/she is on the right developmental path.

Red Flags of Autism Spectrum Disorders:

If your baby shows two or more of these signs, please ask your pediatric healthcare provider for an immediate evaluation.

Impairment in Social Interaction:

- Lack of appropriate eye gaze
- Lack of warm, joyful expressions
- Lack of sharing interest or enjoyment
- Lack of response to name

Impairment in Communication:

- Lack of showing gestures
- Lack of coordination of nonverbal communication
- Unusual prosody (little variation in pitch, odd intonation, irregular rhythm, unusual voice quality)

Repetitive Behaviors & Restricted Interests:

- Repetitive movements with objects
- Repetitive movements or posturing of body, arms, hands, or fingers

Wetherby, A., Woods, J., Allen, L., Cleary, J., Dickinson, H., & Lord, C. (2004). Early indicators of autism spectrum disorders in the second year of life. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 34, 473-493. Based on research at the [Florida State University FIRST WORDS® Project](#).

“Most mommies and daddies tell me “I thought there was a problem at 14 or 15 months...and they told me let’s wait and see because sometimes some kids grow out of it.’ Well, that’s not a good answer. We’ve got to make the distinction between less important problems, where we can wait and see from core problems, which involve a lack of reciprocity and a lack of getting to know your world. For these core problems, we have to act on it yesterday. We can’t wait nine months, we can’t wait two months.” (Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D., Child Psychiatrist)