



 **Early  
Detection Kit**

Dear parent or child care professional,

Autism spectrum disorder is the single fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States affecting one in 88 children including one in 54 boys.

Due to this growing epidemic that affects more children than childhood cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined, it is important to diagnose and begin behavioral intervention as early as possible. We at ASDF know that acting early can make a real difference. That is why we created the Early Detection Kit to help better identify children at risk for an autism spectrum disorder.

Early detection means earlier access to intervention during sensitive periods of brain development. Approximately 75 to 86 percent of those children who receive early intervention between the ages of 2 and 7 will develop some form of functional communication by age 9.

Currently, the average age of diagnosis for a child with autism is between the ages of 3 and 6 – but, if the characteristics are recognized, children can be reliably diagnosed by 18 months. Our hope is by detecting and diagnosing these disorders early on, we can more quickly initiate intervention and spare these children many of the disabling aspects associated with late diagnosis and therefore late treatment.

The Early Detection Kit contains a number of handy reference tools for helping to determine if a young child's characteristics may signal the presence of an autism spectrum disorder. Along with a video presenting a brief overview of autism identifiers in children, the kit also includes a developmental milestones checklist. This checklist provides a list of various developmental milestones children should reach throughout the first four years of life. As your child grows you can check off the capabilities your child reaches. If a child has not reached these milestones by the appropriate age, it should raise a red flag and prompt a professional assessment.

In addition to the checklist, The Early Detection kit also includes age-appropriate activities to help aid a child's growth and development. These activities will help keep a child busy while helping reach important learning and developmental milestones.

As autism rates rise nationwide, the responsibility for making sure these children get the best care possible falls in all our hands. Together, we can help assure autistic children lead full and productive lives.

Warmest regards,



Michael Slutsky  
Executive Director, ASDF

# Developmental Milestones Checklist

Autism spectrum disorders directly affect one in 88 children each year. More children will be diagnosed with autism than AIDS, diabetes and cancer combined. Autism is the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States.

Early detection means earlier access to intervention during sensitive periods of brain development. Below is a developmental checklist. As your child grows, check off the milestones your child reaches. You can use this to talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.



## 7 MONTHS

- Respond when name is called.
- Respond to other people's emotions.
- Use voice to express joy and displeasure.
- Enjoy social play (such as peek-a-boo).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Tell your child's doctor if you notice your child does not reach some of these milestones, as it could be a sign of a developmental delay.

## 1.5 YEARS (18 MONTHS)

- Carry on with simple pretend play ("talk" on a toy phone).
- Point to interesting objects.
- Follow 1-step verbal commands such as "sit down."
- Say several single words.

## 1 YEAR (12 MONTHS)

- Use simple gestures (waving bye-bye).
- Make sounds such as "mama," "dada" and "uh-oh."
- Imitate actions in their play.
- Respond when told "no."

## 2 YEARS (24 MONTHS)

- Use 2- to 4-word phrases.
- Follow simple instructions.
- Become more interested in other children.
- Point to object or pictures in a book.

## 3 YEARS (36 MONTHS)

- Show affection for playmates.
- Use 2- to 3-word sentences in conversation.
- Imitate adults and playmates (run when other children run).
- Play make-believe with dolls, animals and people ("feed" a teddy bear).

## 4 YEARS (48 MONTHS)

- Tell stories.
- Talk about likes and interests.
- Choose to play with other children rather than alone.
- Name some colors and some numbers.

## Activities for Ages 0-6 Months

A lot happens during your baby's first months. Your baby will begin his development by learning to open and focus his eyes. He will begin responding to his name and your voice, and will learn big and small body movements. He might begin to babble and will use his fingers to grab, hold, and shake objects. As his development continues, he'll learn to grasp smaller items, release objects, sit and play on his own, and may begin to move around by creeping along on his belly.

### EARLY CONVERSATIONS



**TIME: 5-10 MIN.**

#### Directions

Babies are fascinated with faces and voices, and your first communications are through the sounds you make and the nearness of your face. It doesn't matter what you say, as long as you are up close and personal, so chatter away.

#### Extensions

- ▶ Take the baby's hand and run it gently over your mouth, hair, eyes, and nose, talking about what you are doing.
- ▶ Repeat, using your hand on the baby's face.
- ▶ Watch carefully and repeat any sounds the baby makes, responding enthusiastically with your attention, smiles, and laughter.
- ▶ Bounce the baby to the rhythm of your words, particularly as you repeat phrases and sounds.
- ▶ Use nursery rhymes as you play. They have a rhythm and cadence that children have loved for hundreds of years.

### GENTLE TOUCH



**TIME: 5-10 MIN.**

#### Directions

Using special care handling babies sends strong messages of love and care. As you talk to your baby softly, you can pay special attention to the ways that you lift and move them to let them know how nice human contact can feel.

#### Extensions

- ▶ Massage a body part gently, such as the arms or legs, and talk about what you are doing.
- ▶ Nuzzle your baby close to your face and whisper softly.
- ▶ Tell your baby what you are doing when you dress him or change his diapers.
- ▶ Respond to crying as soon as you can, showing that you understand the need for attention, whatever the reason.

## Activities for Ages 6-12 Months

Your child will continue learning how to move his body, and will begin creeping, crawling, pulling him/herself up to cruise along furniture, or may begin walking. He'll also learn to play with toys appropriately, wave good-bye, and begin to babble simple words like "mama" and "dada."

### BLOW A KISS



**TIME: 5-10 MIN.**

#### Directions

You can teach your baby to give a gift of love as you blow a kiss to her and encourage copying blowing a kiss by spreading open your arms and saying, "Blow me a kiss."

#### Extensions

- ▶ Help your baby copy you and blow a kiss back.
- ▶ Blow kisses to each other in front of the mirror.

### CAN YOU HEAR ME?



**TIME: 5-10 MIN.**

#### MATERIALS:

LARGE PIECES OF FURNITURE  
TO HIDE BEHIND

#### Directions

- ▶ In this variation of peekaboo, you hide behind a piece of furniture.
- ▶ Call your baby by name, grabbing their attention before you pop out.

#### Extensions

- ▶ Play this game by calling from a nearby room.
- ▶ Play this game using a large bath towel to cover your head.
- ▶ Peek out from the side of your baby's bed after naptime.

## Activities for Ages 1-2 Years

As your child grows into his first year, he may begin to stack, bang, and place objects inside others. His grasp will be precise, and he might begin scribbling and using a sippy cup independently. He'll also begin to engage in pretend play by feeding dolls or stuffed animals. His walking and running skills will also become more steady and established.

### LET'S PRETEND FOR TODDLERS

THIS ACTIVITY WILL GIVE YOUR CHILD'S LARGE MUSCLES A WORKOUT ALONG WITH HIS IMAGINATION.

#### Directions

- ▶ Give your child a series of instructions such as "Let's pretend you are a rabbit. Can you hop like a rabbit?" or "Let's pretend you are an elephant. Can you walk about like a big, heavy elephant?"
- ▶ Try other animals and include things such as plants growing in the ground, a flower opening on a summer day, or a balloon being filled with air.

### PRETEND GROCERY STORE

#### MATERIALS:

- PAPER BAG WITH HANDLES OR SMALL BASKET
- EMPTY FOOD BOXES AND CONTAINERS

TODDLERS HAVE FUN FILLING UP BAGS AND BASKETS WITH JUST ABOUT ANYTHING. FOR VARIETY, USE BLOCKS OR DUPLO IN PLACE OF THE GROCERIES SUGGESTED HERE.

#### Directions

- ▶ Save up empty food boxes and containers. Pudding or Jell-O boxes work well, as do cereal boxes, small yogurt containers, and empty vitamin bottles.
- ▶ Seal the boxes with tape, then use a glue gun to permanently attach the lids to the small containers. (They may be a choking hazard.)
- ▶ Store all your "groceries" in a box or laundry basket.
- ▶ Your child will have fun "going shopping" with a paper bag or small basket.

### I HEAR THUNDER

#### Directions

- ▶ This is sung to the tune of "Frère Jacques," or "Are You Sleeping?"
- ▶ I hear thunder, I hear thunder, (Drum feet on the floor.)
- ▶ Hark, don't you, hark, don't you? (Pretend to listen.)
- ▶ Pitter-patter raindrops, (Flutter your fingers for raindrops.)
- ▶ Pitter-patter raindrops,
- ▶ I'm wet through, (Shake your body vigorously.)
- ▶ So are you! (Point to your child.)

## Activities for Ages 3-4 Years

Building towers and drawing shapes are just some of the developmental milestones your child will reach in his third and fourth year. Aside from buttons, he will begin dressing himself, can speak in simple six-word sentences, and will continue to develop motor skills such as learning to catch a tossed ball.

### NAME-SPELLING GAME

#### MATERIALS:

- INDEX CARDS
- PEN OR MARKER

USING LETTER FLASH CARDS, TEACH YOUR PRESCHOOL CHILD TO SPELL HIS NAME.

#### Directions

- ▶ Print each letter in your child's name on an index card.
- ▶ Lay them out to spell your child's name.
- ▶ Mix them up and have her try to put them back in the proper order.

### IT FELT LIKE...



**TIME: 10-20 MIN.**

#### MATERIALS:

YOUR CHILD'S FAVORITE BOOK

#### Directions

- ▶ You can take a favorite story a step further after you read it by asking the child what a particular character felt like at some point in the story.
- ▶ Help to extend vocabulary as your child searches for ways to explain feelings.

#### Extensions

- ▶ Make a list of words together that describe what a character felt.
- ▶ Ask the child if there is another way the story could have ended.
- ▶ Ask if there is another way a character could have acted.
- ▶ Ask the child how they feel about a particular part of a story.