

## Did you know that ... ?

**Autism** is a developmental disability that usually appears during the first three years of life. The cause is unknown. It affects how a person's brain works, but not all people with autism are affected the same way.

When a person has autism, they may have problems: letting you know what they want; thinking; understanding what other people say or want; ignoring sounds; ignoring things or people that are moving; ignoring lights; being touched; understanding social rules; showing affection; controlling their feelings; knowing how to play with other kids; and dealing with changes.

Autism is a "spectrum disorder." That means that not everyone with autism has all the problems. One person may have three of the problems listed while another person has only one. Some people with autism struggle to learn. Other people with autism are very smart and

can do complicated math when they are 3 years old. Some people with autism have trouble

being touched while others like to hug. Many people with autism like to do things in the same order all the time and have things arranged the same way. This helps them stay calm.

Other people with autism have a very hard time ignoring noises, especially if they are upset or in a new situation. They may try to calm themselves by rocking, moaning, talking loudly or even screaming. The moaning, talking or screaming helps them drown out the other noises so they can calm down. They may also try to go under a desk or in a small, dark place where they feel safer.

**Communication disorders** are disabilities that keep a person from being able to speak or make their speech understood. This can be caused by many different disabilities or injuries. Some people with difficulty speaking may use sign language, gestures or small pictures they carry with them.

**Hearing impairments** include everything from not being able to hear certain sounds to being totally deaf. In most cases, a hearing loss doesn't simply mean that sounds are not loud enough. It usually means that sounds are garbled or unclear. A hearing aid may make speech louder, but usually will not make speech clearer.

### **Learning Disabilities.**

There are many different kinds of learning disabilities and they can range from mild to severe problems. Dyslexia can cause a person to see letters switched around when they read, seeing "bule" instead of "blue", for example.

### **Intellectual Disabilities.**

When a person has an Intellectual disability, it affects their ability to think and reason. There are over 200 known causes for this condition. About one-third of the time no one knows what caused it. Not everyone with this handicap is the same. One person can have mild problems while another may have severe problems. A person with an Intellectual

disability may: have difficulty understanding what other people say or mean; have difficulty saying what they mean or how they feel; have difficulty understanding social cues (for example, if you turn away they may not know this means you don't want to talk to them); have difficulty learning and concentrating; have to do things many more times than average before they learn it; act younger than their age; not understand when someone is making fun of them; may find it hard to read or write; may not recognize that someone is telling them to do something that is wrong.

**Physical Disabilities:** There are a large variety of different physical disabilities, all of which can range from a mild condition to complete immobility. Some people will have more than one disability, such as not being able to use their legs or hands.

**Vision impairments** include things like being short-sighted or far-sighted that are correctable with glasses. It can also mean more serious problems like blindness or problems that are only helped a little by glasses.