

I have concerns about the mental health of my child with ASD, what should I do?

Individuals with ASD experience a number of life stressors including social confusion, peer rejection, difficulties understanding and expressing emotions, unpleasant sensory experiences, and difficulties connected with restricted interests and/or repetitive behaviours. As a result, they are more prone to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and eating disorders. Some adolescents and adults who are experiencing depression, may be at risk for self-harm or suicide. Youth with ASD are similar to other adolescents in their desire to experiment with smoking, alcohol, and drugs. Becoming addicted to these substances, gambling, and/or videogames can be even more dangerous and problematic for an individual with ASD due to social isolation and naivety.

If you suspect your child may have a mental health problem, speak to your pediatrician or family doctor as soon as possible.

- It is important to disclose the ASD diagnosis to the professional you are seeking help from because mental health problems can be difficult to diagnose in individuals with ASD.
- Medications can address a number of different issues: for example, anxiety, depression, attentional problems, aggressive behaviour, and issues with sleeping and eating. Be clear with your health professional about what problems your child is experiencing, including when and where the symptoms are most severe (e.g., school, home, the shopping mall). Also make sure to ask about any potential side effects of the medications.
- It is important to take all medications as directed or they may not be effective.
- It may take several weeks for medications to take effect so it is helpful to keep track of any changes that occur when starting a new medication.
- Counselling can be very beneficial for individuals with mental health issues and their family members as it can provide coping strategies and teach new ways to manage stress and anxiety. A combination of medication and counselling may be recommended and is often the most effective form of treatment.
- Interview potential counsellors to ensure that they have experience working with clients with ASD and that they utilize interventions that have demonstrated success in addressing mental health issues.
- In addition, you can request a copy of the document, "Private Practice Psychologists Specializing in Autism" from a Resource Ambassador at The Ability Hub 403.210.5000 ambassador@theabilityhub.org

RESOURCES

The Resource Centre (a Sinneave Family Foundation initiative) does not endorse or guarantee the exhaustive, complete, accurate or up-to-date nature of information provided and does not assume any risk for the outcome of information or referrals provided.

ASD Mental Health Blog

The aim of this blog is to share research regarding mental health and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) with a diverse audience.

Phone: 416.736.2100 Extension 22987
Address: York University, 4700 Keele Street, BSB 250, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
Email: tablonp@yorku.ca
Website: asdmentalhealth.blog.yorku.ca

Alberta Health Services - Access Mental Health

Assists members of the community to navigate the addiction and mental health system and ensure the clients get to the right service at the right time.

Phone: 403.943.1500, Ext 1 (Child & Adolescent Services), 403-943-1500 Ext 2 (Adult & Senior Services)

Email: mental.health@albertahealthservices.ca

Website: albertahealthservices.ca/info/service.aspx?id=2381

Anxiety BC

An online educational resource with information regarding anxiety and mental health and various treatments including CBT, tools and tips.

Phone: 604.620.0744

Address: 311 - 409 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 1T2

Website: anxietybc.com

Arnika Centre

A community based mental health service for persons 16 years and older with an intellectual disability and a mental health concern. A referral from a family doctor is required.

Phone: 403.943.8301

Address: Ground Floor, 3465 - 26 Avenue, Calgary AB T1Y 6L4

Website: myhealth.alberta.ca/Find-Health-Care/Services/Pages/profile.aspx?SERVICEID=1060552

Calgary Distress Centre

Provides crisis support, professional counselling, and referrals to social services at no cost.

Phone: 403.266.HELP (4357) - (24 hour crisis line), Administration 403.266.1601

Address: 300, 1010 - 8th Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2P 1J2

Email: help@distresscentre.com

Website: distresscentre.com

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

Offers mental health interventions, education, and support for caregivers. Fees based on a sliding scale, and no one is refused due to financial reasons. They also have an 8 week Capable Careers (Psycho-Educational) Group for family & friends of adults with a mental illness.

Phone: 403.297.1700

Email: info@cmha.calgary.ab.ca

Website: cmha.calgary.ab.ca

MindBalance for ASD

An anxiety and mood management program designed for parents and children aged 10 and older. This program focuses on teaching effective strategies to cope with worry and depression including mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.

Phone: 403.282.1035

Address: Classes are held at The Ability Hub, 300, 3820 – 24th Avenue NW, Calgary, AB T3B 2X9

Website: livingasd.ca

Psychologists Association of Alberta

Professional association for psychologists working in Alberta. Offers a referral service and assistance in selecting psychologists with specialization in a variety of issues.

Phone: 780.424.0294 or 1.888.424.0297
Address: Unit 103, 1207 - 91 Street SW, Edmonton, AB T6X 1E9
Website: psychologistsassociation.ab.ca

Last updated March 2017