



POST-DIAGNOSIS ASSESSMENT infoSheet

Once a diagnosis has been made or suggested then there is a seemingly endless round of assessments to undergo. These will involve language, social play, co-ordination, fine and gross motor skills, and so on.

An Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis (see [Diagnostic Criteria](#)) identifies abnormal performance in a number of areas. For ASD, the diagnosis tells very little of the story. The requirements of purely diagnosis assessment lacks the detail required to develop a program of treatment and rehabilitation.

Assessment of autism is demanding because of case variability and the need to evaluate multiple areas of functioning.

It is important to know your child's strengths and weaknesses so that early intervention therapies can be specific in approach. Each child has different needs and requires different specific target areas within each focus group. The assessments will also establish a 'baseline' of your child's ability.

Diagnosis may observe that a child with autism has impairments of communication. A child with ASD may have dyspraxia (in speech pathology terms). Another child with autism may have an enormous vocabulary of concrete nouns but may not understand verbs; or may not attach meaning to more abstract words like "yes" and "no". Effective treatment for different communication impairments is completely different. An effective program of treatment for an individual's condition depends on particularly detailed understanding of the individual's functioning in all areas of life. The effect of ASD is not limited to the diagnostic criteria for autism.

Standardised tests can be helpful, especially if the detail of the test is considered. They can help identify strengths and weaknesses. They can set a baseline against which program outcomes can be measured. For example, some researchers observe generally improved functioning measured through IQ tests that parallel improved social and communication skills.

There is a substantial possibility that other conditions, such as seizures, are co-morbid with an ASD. Such conditions may have been missed previously due to communication or sensory abnormality/dysfunction.

A person with ASD needs a program that comprehensively addresses all their needs. Typically, their individual program will extend beyond the limited set of criteria that make up an ASD diagnosis. Development of such a program relies on the results of broad assessment and ongoing review.

It is a good idea to keep a display folder in which you file all documents related to these assessments; and if time permits to keep a journal of your impressions of your child's behaviours. This will enable ongoing monitoring, measurement and evaluation of your child's progress; thus facilitating positive and specific modifications to the intervention program.