

World Autism Awareness Day



In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly marked the 2nd of April as World Autism Awareness Day. This day aims to celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of people who have autism.

Statistics indicate that Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affects 1 in 146 births in the United Arab Emirates.

Why is World Autism Awareness Day important?

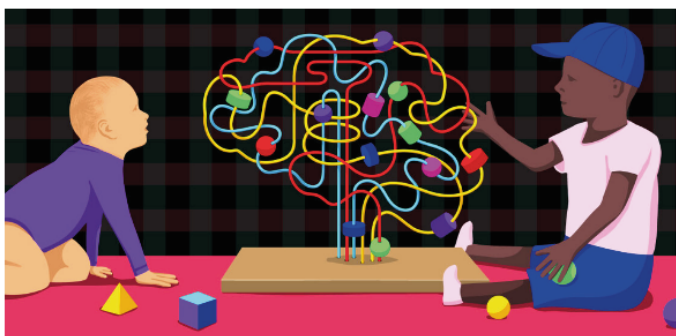
World Autism Awareness Day intends to promote awareness, develop knowledge about autism and deliver information on why it is important to detect this medical condition at an early age.

The theme for this year : The UN has chosen to focus on the topic of inclusion in the workplace: Challenges and opportunities post-pandemic in 2022.

What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a broad term used to describe a group of neurodevelopmental disabilities that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioural challenges.

The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD vary from being gifted to severely challenged. People with ASD vary in their need for help in their daily lives.



Causes of Autism Spectrum Disorder

The exact causes of Autism are unknown, however most recent research shows that there is no single cause associated with this medical condition. Certain factors may increase a child's risk of being autistic, such as:

- **Gender:** Boys are about four times more likely to develop autism than girls.
- **Family history:** Having an immediate family member with autism.
- **Genetic mutations:** Duplication of a region on the X chromosome leads to a genetic disorder characterised by severe autism.
- **Preterm babies:** Babies born before 26 weeks of gestation may have a greater risk of developing autism as a disorder.

How can Autism be managed?

The goal of autism treatment should be to treat the child's unique array of symptoms and needs. Most often, it requires a combined treatment approach.

Common autism treatments include behaviour therapy, speech-language therapy, play-based therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and nutritional therapy.

It is important to consider the routine and sustainability of the programme.



What are the sign and symptoms of Autism?

- Social, emotional, and communication skills problems.
- Repetition of certain behaviours echo words or phrases mentioned.
- Difficulty in developing and maintaining relationships.
- Fixated interests or preoccupations.
- Avoiding eye contact and wanting to be alone.

How can Autism Spectrum Disorder be diagnosed?

Autism can sometimes be detected at 18 months or younger. By age 2, a diagnosis is very reliable. The specialist can diagnose autism by:

- Observing a child's social interactions, communication skills, and behaviour and how they change over time.
- Hearing and speech-language test, developmental level, and social and behavioural issues.
- Social and communication interactions and performance scoring.
- DSM-5 testing by the American Psychiatric Association.
- Genetic testing to identify a genetic disorder.

A Message for Parents

The best thing you can do is to start treatment right away. Seek help as soon as you suspect something is wrong.

Do not wait to see if your child will catch up later or outgrow the problem.



Remember : The earlier children with Autism Spectrum Disorder get help, the greater their chances of treatment success. Early intervention is the most effective way to speed up your child's development and reduce the symptoms of autism over the lifespan.