

Autism Diagnosis: Screening and Assessments for Children and Adults

Understanding Autism Diagnosis

Autism diagnosis is a detailed process that looks at a person's developmental history, current behaviours, and lived experiences. At Action For Autism (AFA), our team provides assessments for children, adolescents and adults across the autism spectrum.

Each assessment is tailored to the individual's age, background, skills and interests and is conducted with empathy, professionalism and international best practices.

Screening and Diagnostic Assessments in Children

For children, the diagnostic process involves:

- Interviews with family members or caregivers to gather developmental history.
- Direct observations and interactions with the child in structured and unstructured settings.
- Use of internationally standardized diagnostic criteria (DSM-5) and evidence-based tools.

Our team is trained in administering:

- Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS)
- Autism Diagnostic Interview – Revised (ADI-R)
- Other tools such as SCQ, SRS, M-CHAT-R, and a range of developmental assessments.

What families can expect:

- A careful process that also looks at related or overlapping conditions.
- Clear feedback on how the diagnosis was made.
- A detailed written report including recommendations for services and next steps.
- Guidance on starting appropriate interventions.

Families are encouraged to share any previous diagnostic evaluations in advance to support the process.

Diagnostic Assessments in Adults

Autism can be identified at any age. Many adults seek diagnosis after years of questions, self-discovery, or experiences of difference. At AFA, we recognise that an adult diagnosis is a deeply personal journey and it cannot be diagnosed in the same way as child diagnosis.

Adult Diagnostic Process at AFA

1. Initial Contact

- Any adult can email us at helpline.afa@gmail.com with:
 - Name, age, contact details, city of residence
 - Reason for contact and any specific requests
 - Preferred mode of interaction (in-person, online, or hybrid; via email, calls, or text)

2. Information Sharing

- We will provide details about:
 - Process and timelines
 - Costs involved
 - Earliest available appointments

3. Questionnaires and Interactions

- Individuals are requested to complete online forms before sessions begin.
- Engage in 3–4 weekly interactions (50–70 minutes each), either in-person at our New Delhi centre, online or via phone.
- Input from trusted family, friends, or colleagues (especially those who knew you as a child) is encouraged but optional.

4. Assessment Duration

- The process may take 4–6 weeks or longer. Extra sessions are added at no cost if required.
- We prioritise depth and accuracy over speed.

5. Feedback and Report

- A detailed discussion about the findings and next steps.
- A written diagnostic report (note: this is not the same as government disability certification).
- Recommendations, resources, and community connections.

Advice for Adults Considering Assessment

- **Start when you feel ready.** The process can involve both joyful and challenging self-reflection.
- **Talk to a trusted friend, therapist or the diagnostician** before committing if you feel unsure.
- **Include others if possible.** Additional perspectives can help, but your voice remains central.
- **Take your time.** There is no rush—understanding yourself is a process.

Life After Diagnosis

Receiving an autism diagnosis, whether in childhood or adulthood, can be life-changing. The journey looks different for everyone, but some common themes include:

- **Relief and validation** after years of wondering.
- **Mixed emotions** such as joy, self-doubt, anger, or regret when reflecting on past experiences.
- **Navigating reactions of others** who may or may not understand.
- **Exploring identity** and deciding whether or how to share your diagnosis.

What Can Help

- Connecting with **other autistic people**—at your own pace and comfort level.
- Engaging with **resources created by autistic voices**.
- Building a **support circle** of trusted neurodivergent and neurotypical allies.
- Taking time to **develop your own language** for self-understanding before sharing your diagnosis with others.
- Practicing “scripts” for disclosure (what to share, how much, with whom, and in what context).

There is **no right or wrong way** to live with a new diagnosis. It is your journey, and you decide how to move forward.

To start the diagnostic process, email us at: helpline.afa@gmail.com