

## **WATCH FOR EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM**

Signs of autism almost always develop before a child is three years old, yet, it has become apparent that many children are not diagnosed until much later, creating more problems for the child and family. Children with autism respond better to treatment if it begins by preschool. Early diagnosis is so crucial that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has recently issued a news release calling for pediatricians to do early autism screening on all children.

**Treatment cannot make autism must go away, but early intervention and treatment can help the child cope in regular environments. “Red Flags” for needed immediate evaluation include:**

- **no babbling or pointing by 12 months**
- **no single words by 16 months**
- **no two-word spontaneous phrases by 24 months**
- **loss or social skills at any age**

**Additional signs for parents to observe:**

- **Not turning to look when parents point for a child to observe an object**
- **Smiling late**
- **Failure to make eye contact**
- **Less likely to form attachments with blankets, stuffed animal and may prefer hard items such as flashlights, keys, action figures, flashlights, etc, dolls**

**Autism impacts the individuals in various degrees and ways, but will likely include some or all of the following**

### **1.Social interaction:**

- **Impaired nonverbal behaviors, such as eye contact, facial expression, body posture**
- **Lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment; social and emotional reciprocity**

### **2. Communication:**

- **Delay or total lack of development of spoken language**
- **Repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language**
- **lack of varied, spontaneous make believe play or social imitative play**

### **3. Restrictive repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests or activities**

- **Preoccupation with one or more patterns of interest**
- **Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects.**

Resources: Valley Mental Health's Carmen B. Center for  
Children with Autism (801)581-0194  
[www.utah.networkofcare.org](http://www.utah.networkofcare.org)