



**Does your child have autism,
or do you think your child may
have autism?**

Today there are many ways doctors, specialists, and communities can help children with autism and their families. TRICARE and its network of doctors are committed to serving its military families and to helping your child thrive. This brochure is a brief introduction to autism and the services covered by TRICARE.

TRICARE RESOURCES

Contact your regional contractor to find a doctor, check on the status of your prior authorization for ABA services, or for more information on TRICARE-covered services. For more information on TRICARE's covered services for children with autism, visit www.tricare.mil/autism.

TRICARE North Region

Health Net Federal Services, LLC
1-877-TRICARE (1-877-874-2273)
www.hnfs.com

TRICARE South Region

Humana Military
1-800-444-5445
HumanaMilitary.com

TRICARE West Region

UnitedHealthcare Military & Veterans
1-877-988-WEST (1-877-988-9378)
www.uhcmilitarywest.com

AUTISM RESOURCES

National Center on Birth Defects
and Developmental Disabilities
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
1-888-232-6348 (TTY)
www.cdc.gov/autism

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

1-800-370-2943
1-888-320-6942 (TTY)
www.nichd.nih.gov

National Institute of Mental Health

1-866-615-6464
1-866-415-8051 (TTY)
www.nimh.nih.gov

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A CONVERSATION ABOUT AUTISM

AND YOUR TRICARE® HEALTH CARE BENEFIT

This brochure is not all-inclusive. For additional information, please visit www.tricare.mil.

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What is autism?

Children with autism have problems with communication and behavior, such as how they interact with others. Poorly understood genetic and environmental factors are thought to cause autism. The full name for autism is autism spectrum disorder. Autism affects people of all ages and backgrounds, but is usually diagnosed before age 3.

What are some signs that your child may have autism?

Children with autism may show these signs:

- Not responding when you say the child's name
- Not holding eye contact
- Trouble talking, or a delay in first learning to talk
- Not playing well with other children
- Making repetitive movements like rocking, twirling, or hand-flapping
- Harming themselves, such as by banging their head or biting

You may begin to see signs of autism in infancy and early childhood. Sometimes autism is not diagnosed until later in life because the symptoms are very mild, or the symptoms appear to be part of another condition.

What should you do?

If you think your child may have autism, speak up. Talk to your doctor about your concerns. Most experts agree that the earlier you get help for your child with autism, the better. Early treatment can bring about major improvements in your child's behavior.

How is autism diagnosed?

If your child's doctor thinks that your child has autism, the doctor may diagnose your child or may refer you to a specialist. Tell your doctor that you have TRICARE, and ask to see a provider who is approved to diagnose autism under TRICARE.

How do you treat autism?

There is no cure for autism. However, the symptoms can be treated in many ways, such as:

- **Education and behavior interventions.** Autism specialists can help children develop certain social and language skills. One strategy is called applied behavior analysis (ABA) and is covered by TRICARE. ABA helps children with autism develop certain skills, address social issues, and improve or manage behaviors.

Most experts agree that the sooner you start your child in education and behavior interventions, the better. This is why TRICARE covers ABA services at all ages. For more information, please visit www.tricare.mil/autism.

- **Medications.** Your child's doctor may prescribe one or more drugs to treat problems related to autism, such as anxiety, depression, or hyperactivity. Some children who have autism also have other conditions, like epilepsy. TRICARE covers medical needs for these conditions as well.

What autism services and related services are covered by TRICARE?

TRICARE covers services that children with autism may need, such as:

- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Doctor visits
- Psychological tests and services
- Speech therapy
- Prescription drugs
- ABA

How do I get ABA services for my child?

Once your child is diagnosed with autism, a series of steps will occur. Generally, you will:

- Get approval from TRICARE (called a prior authorization) to see an ABA specialist.
- Choose an ABA specialist and notify TRICARE to make sure the specialist is approved and taking patients.
- Meet with the ABA specialist. At this time, the specialist will determine what services will be most helpful to your child.
- Work with the ABA specialist to create a treatment plan for your child.

The treatment plan may involve your child meeting with a behavior technician for a certain number of hours every week to work on goals. Parents and caregivers will learn them too.

How do I prepare for the future for my child with autism?

TRICARE knows that autism is a life-changing diagnosis that can present many challenges for your entire family. During this transition and into the future, TRICARE is here to help you get the health care your child needs. Please call on your doctors, ABA specialists, your TRICARE regional contractor, and the other autism resources listed on the back panel of this brochure for more information and support.

An Important Note About TRICARE Program Information
*At the time of publication, this information is current. It is important to remember that TRICARE policies and benefits are governed by public law and federal regulations. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law and/or federal regulations are amended. **Military hospital and clinic guidelines and policies may be different than those outlined in this publication.** For the most recent information, contact your TRICARE regional contractor or local military hospital or clinic. The TRICARE program meets the minimum essential coverage requirement under the Affordable Care Act.*