What is Autism Spectrum Disorder in children?
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that occurs when genetic and environmental factors come together to change brain development.
- Symptoms of ASD can appear in the first few years of life.

What can ASD look like in children?
- Problems communicating and interacting with others, playing, and making and keeping friends.
- Repeating words or phrases.
- Unusual body movements like rocking or flapping hands.
- Overly strong interests in topics, characters, or certain objects.
- Being very sensitive to surroundings, having rituals, and needing routines.

How is ASD diagnosed in a child?
- A licensed psychologist, neurologist, or behavioral pediatrician will usually do several tests with the caregiver and child together and do a thorough interview with a caregiver.
- ASD is diagnosed when the child demonstrates enough symptoms in two big areas: difficulties with social communication and specific behavior challenges and differences.
- No single medical test can diagnose ASD.
- Follow up tests such as nervous system exams, genetic tests, or imaging tests such as MRIs may help provide information about other areas of functioning or concern.
- Additional testing can be done for other disorders that children with ASD are more likely to have such as developmental delay, anxiety, depression, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
How is ASD treated in a child?
• Each child with ASD needs their own special treatment program, but there are various methods.
• Therapy based in applied behavior analysis (ABA) is associated with the best outcomes for children with ASD. ABA teaches language, social skills, and thinking (cognitive) skills and also helps decrease challenging behaviors that may interfere with the child’s life.
• Caregiver consultation and training can be useful for improving behavior in daily life.
• Speech therapy or occupational therapy may be appropriate as speech delays and fine motor difficulties are common in children with ASD.
• Special education programs focus on skills, speech, language, self-care, and job skills.
• While there is no medication for ASD, medication may be helpful for mental health needs such as anxiety, depression, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The importance of Support:
• Caregivers of a child with ASD must have a good support system in place to help the child cope with the unique aspects of ASD.
• Part of this support will come from the healthcare team that is treating your child and educating you as a caregiver.
• It is worth noting that although there is no cure for ASD, with therapy, children can absolutely make progress and have better days.

Did you know: 1 in 5 children has a significantly impairing mental disorder, yet less than half get the treatment they need? Join our mission to change that!