



## Autism

### What will happen to my child?

**For many parents of children with autism, the future is one of their biggest worries. In particular, you may worry what will happen if you can't care for your child any more.**

It's hard to say what will happen to your child. This is because autism affects different children in different ways. Some can live on their own. But others will always need a lot of help. <sup>1 2</sup>

Keep in mind that the right support, education and training now may help your child have fewer problems later on. <sup>3</sup>

Here's what we know from research. <sup>1</sup>

About 15 in 100 children with autism grow up to live on their own.

About 15 in 100 to 20 in 100 live alone but with help.

Many adults with autism need full-time care for the rest of their life.

How well your child can do on their own is linked to **whether they can speak and learn.** <sup>2 3</sup> Some children have a good chance of living alone and holding down a job later on. <sup>3</sup> But others have worse symptoms and need a lot of support in all areas of their life, including housing, work and social activities. <sup>2</sup> Many adults with autism need to live in special places that provide care for the long term.

### Autism in adults

One study looked at 75 people with autism. <sup>3</sup> They were 29 years old, on average. This study was small. It's also a bit out of date, from 1994. But what the study found gives us some idea of how adults with autism get along.

#### Living

8 of the 75 people were living on their own or partly on their own.

About 25 were living with their parents.

About 30 were living in special communities, most built specially for people with autism.

10 were living in long-stay places.

#### Working

15 of the 75 people had gotten some kind of certificate, diploma or degree in school.

7 worked in regular jobs for pay, and one worked for himself.

4 had volunteer jobs.

50 went to day centers or living centers. These centers didn't offer much chance to learn skills that would help the young people find regular jobs.

#### Social life

25 of the 75 people had some friends.

1 was married.

50 didn't have any friends at all.

### Autism in older children and teenagers

Autism doesn't go away. But certain kinds of behavior often get better as your child gets older. In a study of about 200 families, more than a third of parents said that their children had gotten better between the ages of 10 years and 15 years. <sup>3</sup> But about a quarter of parents said that their children's behavior had gotten worse.

Some types of behavior may get better, while other types get worse. <sup>4</sup>

Some young people with autism may realize that they are different. This can be a good thing, especially if they learn new skills to help them cope better. But young people with autism need a lot of support. If your child realizes they don't fit in, they may get depressed or have other problems with their mental health. <sup>2</sup>

### What does it feel like?

You may wonder what it feels like to have autism. To get an idea, you can read

books written by people with this condition. Here are some examples.

*Nobody Nowhere: The Extraordinary Autobiography of an Autistic* by Donna Williams (published by Jessica Kingsley, 1998)  
*Somebody Somewhere: Breaking Free From the World of Autism* by Donna Williams (published by Jessica Kingsley, 1998)  
*Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports From My Life With Autism* by Temple Grandin (published by Vintage Books, 1996)

**Sources for the information on this page:**

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