

# ASD and Adolescence Part One - Introduction

This article is the first of a series of eight articles about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and adolescence. The articles are designed to be a guide for parents of children with ASD; they will provide information about adolescence, the extra challenges that may arise for children with ASD during this time, and techniques for teaching your child about adolescence and dealing with the challenges.

The eight articles are:

1. Introduction
2. Physical changes and lifestyle choices
3. Teaching public and private and appropriate sexual language
4. Emotional and social changes
5. Peer pressure, bullying, drugs and alcohol
6. Sexuality
7. Unwanted sexual attention and sexual abuse
8. Techniques and advice for parents

## Introduction to ASD and adolescence

While children with ASD are often delayed socially and emotionally, their physical and biological development is not usually delayed, and is likely to occur at a normal rate. Although they might not seem emotionally ready to learn about puberty, it is essential that they have the knowledge before the physical changes begin to happen to their bodies.

Because children with ASD are typically lacking in friends, they will be exposed to fewer learning situations that occur naturally for children and will have fewer

chances to practice the skills they have learned than other children. This means that the parents have a large role in educating their children with ASD about adolescence and sexuality.

## Characteristics of ASD that are likely to impact adolescence

Particular characteristics of ASD that will impact on the changes that occur during adolescence include anxiety, the resisting of change, sensory issues, communication and emotion problems, social delay, motor coordination problems and impairments in executive functioning.

## What children with ASD need to know about adolescence:

- Their body and that of the other sex
- Physical changes
- Lifestyle choices
- Emotional and social changes
- Bullying and peer pressure
- Sex and sexual relationships

## Why do they need to know?

There are many reasons that knowledge of all these things is necessary. It will prevent them from being scared or confused by the changes because what they are going through is normal. The information is necessary for them to make informed decisions and to help prevent 'experimental' mistakes. It will reduce the risk of inappropriate sexual behaviour and of being targeted by bullies or sexual predators due to naivety.



## References and Recommended Reading

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