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Autism: Support and Training for the Family

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Topic Overview

Having a family member with autism presents many challenges. Support and training for parents and siblings are important components of treatment. Training family members about autism and how to effectively manage the symptoms can reduce family stress and improve the functioning of the child with autism. Some families will need more outside assistance than others, depending on their internal functioning, established support systems, and financial situation.

It is important for parents to actively seek assistance from whatever sources are available. Talk to your health professional and investigate what help is available locally. Family, friends, public agencies, and national or community organizations are all potential resources.

Whatever the source of support, the following measures are helpful for all families who have a member with autism.

- **Schedule breaks.** Daily demands of caring for a child with autism can be overwhelming. Trained personnel can relieve family members from these duties as needed. These breaks can help families communicate in a less stressful context and allow parents to focus on their relationships with their other children. Having regular breaks may also help a family continue to care for a child at home, rather than becoming so exhausted that they resort to institutional care. Government programs exist to help families who cannot afford this occasional care.
- **Seek assistance for a child with autism who is entering adolescence.** Community services and public programs can help families during what can be an especially difficult time for their child. An adolescent child may benefit from group home situations, special employment, and other programs designed to help the transition into adulthood.
- **Make contact with other families who have a child with autism.** There are many families who share your concerns and daily challenges. Local and national groups can help connect families and provide much-needed sources of information. Most health professionals can recommend some of these organizations.

Credits

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Author: Healthwise Staff

Medical Review:
John Pope MD - Pediatrics
Kathleen Romito MD - Family Medicine
Louis Pellegrino MD - Developmental Pediatrics

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