

CONDITION GUIDE

Autism: a practical guide to support

A plain-English guide for autistic people, parents and families in Australia

“Please, not someone new every week.” For many autistic people and their families, predictable days and a familiar face matter more than almost anything else. This guide brings together practical ideas from Amaze, Raising Children Network and healthdirect, the NDIS and Thriving Kids changes in 2026, and the questions worth asking along the way.

It is general information only. Your GP, paediatrician or psychologist knows your situation and should guide decisions about assessment and support. We use identity-first language (“autistic person”), as Amaze, Aspect and Autism CRC do; always follow each person's own preference.

Autism in plain English

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disability that affects how a person communicates, relates to others and experiences the world. Raising Children Network describes it as a natural variation in the way the brain develops and processes information. Amaze notes it is not caused by parenting or vaccines.

The ABS counted **290,900 autistic Australians in 2022** (1.1% of the population), up 41.8% from 2018. A diagnosis includes a support level, from “requiring support” (Level 1) to “requiring very substantial support” (Level 3). Amaze talks about “high support needs” and “low support needs” rather than functioning labels.

- **Diagnosis:** possible from 12 to 18 months, usually from around 2 years. There's no single test. Australia has a National Guideline for assessment and diagnosis, published by Autism CRC and approved by the NHMRC, which covers adults as well as children.
- **Adults:** healthdirect says autism is sometimes noticed much later in life, and many women find out in adulthood. Amaze says adult assessments are not fully government funded, so expect an out-of-pocket cost.
- **Other conditions:** Amaze notes many autistic people also experience anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, epilepsy or intellectual disability.

Everyday ideas that help

These ideas come from Raising Children Network and Amaze. The autistic person is always the best guide to what works for them.

- **Predictability:** many autistic people value rules, structure and routine, and find sudden changes hard. Give a heads-up before anything changes.
- **Visual supports:** pictures, photos, symbols and visual schedules help people know what happens next. Raising Children rates the research as showing positive effects, at low cost.
- **Sensory comfort:** some people are over-sensitive to sound, light, touch or crowds; others seek sensations out. Try a quiet space, noise-cancelling headphones and a “break” card.
- **Recovery time:** managing sensory input can be tiring. Plan quiet time after busy places.
- **Outings:** look for sensory-friendly cinema sessions and quieter shopping times.

Tip: write a one-page “about me” sheet: how I communicate, what helps, what doesn't, and what a good day looks like. Give it to every new worker, teacher or clinician.

The NDIS and Thriving Kids in 2026

Applying to the NDIS: you must be younger than 65 on the day you apply and meet the residence and disability (or early intervention) requirements. The NDIS document *Applying to the NDIS* (August 2026) puts autism assessed as Level 2 or Level 3 on **List A**, conditions likely to meet the disability requirements. Other autism diagnoses sit on **List B**, which usually means more evidence about how autism affects daily life.

Children under 9: the NDIS early childhood approach supports children younger than 9 with developmental delay or disability, through local early childhood partners, even if the child isn't eligible for the NDIS.

Thriving Kids: began on 1 October 2026 for children aged 8 and under with developmental delay or autism and low to moderate support needs, with all supports due by 1 January 2028. In NSW, a diagnosis won't be required, and targeted allied health supports start from January 2027 through a central intake run by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. The NDIS says there will be no change to NDIS access or eligibility until 1 January 2028, and children with permanent and significant disability or high support needs will continue to access the NDIS.

NDIS laws changed in August 2026 and more changes are coming. Always check the latest at [ndis.gov.au](https://www.ndis.gov.au) or call 1800 800 110.

Questions to ask your GP, paediatrician or psychologist

- Who can do an assessment that follows the National Guideline, and what will it cost?
- What support level is being recommended, and why?
- Can the report describe how autism affects daily life, not just the diagnosis?
- Are there other conditions we should look at, such as sleep, anxiety or sensory needs?
- Which local supports can we use while we wait?

Questions to ask your NDIS planner or early childhood partner

- Does Thriving Kids or the NDIS fit my child best, and how will that change after January 2028?
- What evidence do you need for List A or List B?
- Can the plan include life skills, daily living and community participation supports?
- Can we keep the same support workers if the plan changes?
- How do we request a change if things aren't working?

How Kinship Uniting Services can help

From Colebee and Blacktown to The Ponds, Kellyville and Stanhope Gardens. We start by asking what works for you, and then we keep doing it that way.

We understand. A new worker, a late arrival, a plan that shifts without warning. For many autistic people, those aren't small things. They can use up the energy a whole day needed. Noise, crowds and harsh lighting can do the same.

Families often spend years explaining the same things to new people: how the person communicates, what helps, what to avoid. You shouldn't have to keep starting from the beginning.

We're qualified. Kinship Uniting Services is a registered NDIS provider (4-GWVHCEY), operating in disability and aged care since 2017, and we've supported hundreds of clients and families. Our founder, Shazia Begum, has spent more than 15 years alongside people living with disability. We're registered to deliver Supported Independent Living (SIL). The same support worker comes every visit, and families get updates as standard.

Here's how we can help.

- **Life skills and group activities.** Cooking, budgeting, catching up with others: building the skills you choose, at your pace. Life skills and group activities
- **Community participation.** Going where you want to go, at the times that suit you, with someone who knows what works and what doesn't. Community participation
- **Daily living.** Help with routines at home, done the same way each time, so nothing has to be renegotiated. Daily living support



- **Respite for the family.** A familiar support worker stays with your child or family member at home or takes them out, so you can rest, get to your own appointments or simply have the afternoon. NDIS-funded or booked privately. Respite care
- **Supported Independent Living.** For autistic adults ready to live with housemates and support at home. We're registered to deliver SIL; call us to talk about current availability. Supported Independent Living

For families, carers and referrers

For families and carers. Families hear from us about changes as standard, so nobody is chasing information. Respite with the same familiar worker means your break doesn't come at the cost of a harder week.

For support coordinators and plan managers. If you coordinate supports or manage plans for an autistic participant, tell us about their communication, sensory needs and routines up front, and we'll talk through the support worker match before the first visit. More at kinshipunitingservices.com/for-referrers.

Where to get help

- **Amaze Autism Connect** (free national autism helpline): 1300 308 699, weekdays 8am to 7pm, amaze.org.au
- **Thriving Kids Autism Helpline** (families of children 8 and under, run by Amaze): 1300 654 789, weekdays 8am to 7pm
- **Aspect** (Autism Spectrum Australia): 1800 277 328, aspect.org.au
- **NDIS:** 1800 800 110, ndis.gov.au
- **Raising Children Network:** raisingchildren.net.au (runs the Thriving Kids information hub)
- **healthdirect** (24/7 health advice): 1800 022 222. In an emergency, call 000.



Your checklist

- ☐ Write a one-page “about me” sheet
- ☐ Book a GP appointment to talk about assessment or referral
- ☐ Ask what the assessment will cost and how long the wait is
- ☐ Child 8 or under? Call the Thriving Kids Autism Helpline (1300 654 789)
- ☐ Gather reports that describe daily life, not just the diagnosis
- ☐ Contact your local NDIS partner or early childhood partner
- ☐ Make a visual schedule for the week
- ☐ Plan quiet recovery time after busy days

Ready to talk? We're here

If you'd like us to help with this, call 0437 733 744 and we'll talk it through. Prefer writing to talking? Send an enquiry online or email info@kinshipunitingservices.com instead.

Call 0437 733 744 or 0424 756 143 · info@kinshipunitingservices.com · 39 Victory Road, Colebee NSW 2761 · kinshipunitingservices.com/get-support

Deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment? Contact us through the National Relay Service: Speak & Listen 1300 555 727, TTY 133 677, SMS relay 0423 677 767.

Sources

Amaze: What is autism? — <https://www.amaze.org.au/understanding-autism/what-is-autism/>

Amaze: Autism assessment and diagnosis in Australia — <https://www.amaze.org.au/understand-autism/assessment-and-diagnosis/autism-assessment-and-diagnosis-australia/>

Amaze: Our language — <https://www.amaze.org.au/about-amaze/our-language/>

Raising Children Network: Autism overview — <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/learning-about-autism/about-autism/asd-overview>

Raising Children Network: Sensory sensitivities — <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/behaviour/understanding-behaviour/sensory-sensitivities-asd>

Raising Children Network: Visual supports — <https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-guide/visual-supports>

healthdirect: Autism — <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/autism>

ABS: Autism in Australia, 2022 — <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/autism-australia-2022>

Autism CRC: National Guideline — <https://www.autismcrc.com.au/national-guideline>

Aspect: Contact us — <https://www.aspect.org.au/contact-us>

NDIS: Applying to the NDIS (List A and B) — <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/7752/download?attachment>

NDIS: First phase of Thriving Kids supports start today — <https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/11706-first-phase-thriving-kids-supports-start-today>

NDIS: Guide to the early childhood approach — <https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying/children/guide-early-childhood-approach>

NDIS: Securing the NDIS for future generations — <https://www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-laws/securing-ndis-future-generations>

NSW DCJ: Thriving Kids — <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/disability-and-inclusion/thriving-kids.html>



NDIS: Contact — <https://www.ndis.gov.au/contact>