

## **Asperger's disorder**

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The Asperger's Disorder or Syndrome (AS) is characterized by deficient social relationships, restricted range of interests and abnormal behaviours; however no delays are present in the development of language, cognition, self-care and curiosity for the environment. Restricted albeit intense and particularly absorbing interests, verbosity, pedantry, lack of motor dexterity are typical characteristics of this disorder, although they did not account for diagnostic criteria.

Epidemiological studies report very differing data, probably due to the limited agreement reached by researchers on diagnostic criteria. Unlike previous years, diagnosis of AS is more frequent and often helps to detect a category of people with autistic-like features and normal or higher IQ.

Etiology of AS is only partially known: most of scholars think that this disorder might have genetic bases, combined with environmental factors. As far as the disorder course is concerned, no specific studies are currently available on the long-term outcome of people with AS; however, deficient social relationships, in particular eccentricity and social insensitiveness, seem to last all life long.

One of the most challenging aspects of diagnosing AS is to understand whether it is a variant of the high-functioning Autism (AS) or it is rather a diagnostic category per sé. Although a number of scholars have found higher levels of anxiety in AS individuals – attributable to their awareness of being different –, most of the studies carried out so far seem to indicate that Autism and AS are little distinguishable only on the basis of cognitive, motor and behavioural characteristics. Therefore, diagnosis still remains an open issue.

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