Diagnosis Quick Guide

Aspergers

Aspergrs is the milder variant of autism disorder. Aspergers is not physically recognizable, but is normally identified through characteristics of social isolation and eccentric behavior in childhood. Children often display social awkwardness and have trouble communicating with others.

There is no cure, but rehabilitative treatments have helped teach children to interact more with others.

Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disease of the airways causing them to be over sensitive and inflamed.

Asthma can be controlled with treatment. The three major medicines are long-term control, quick relief and oral steroids.

Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Those with ADHD normally have above average intelligence; however, the intelligence is not available for organized use.

Symptoms of ADHD include: having a short attention span, increased probability of becoming easily distracted, poor listening skills, inability to finish what they start, being impulsive, having poor organization, disruptive, over flow of body energy and never being completely at rest, having an overflow of emotions, never being fully satisfied, always blaming others, overreacting to criticism, and constant make believe.

Treatment includes interventions in diet, medicine, organizing tight structure, allowing for immaturity, helping with school work, consistent discipline, professional help for the parents, and parent organization.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

Those with ADD exhibit similar symptoms to those with ADHD; except for they do not appear hyperactive.

Symptoms of ADHD include: drifting away from the task, loose thought patterns, inability to hold onto first impressions, delay in delivering messages or developing a full mental image, difficulty recalling terminology, and the tendency to make oral footnotes.

As with ADHD, treatment includes interventions in diet, medicine, organizing tight structure, allowing for immaturity, helping with school work, consistent discipline, professional help for the parents, and parent organization.

Autism

Autism is marked by abnormal or impaired development in social interaction and communication. Those with Autism have a restricted repertoire of activities and interests. One of the first signs of autism is a person's inability to speak or repetition of the same words. Other signs include: not playing imaginatively with peers, adherence to routines, repeating behaviors over and over, spinning or lining up objects, hand flapping, body rocking, and severe oversensitivity or under sensitivity to external stimuli, and an inability to cope with any unexpected change in routine.

Treatment for Autism is highly debatable. Many doctors say there is no treatment, while others say treatment consists of a dietary intervention, applied behavior analysis, and biomedical intervention.

Bi-Polar Disorder

Bi-Polar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to function. Different from the normal ups and downs that everyone goes through, the symptoms of bipolar disorder are severe. They can result in damaged relationships poor job or school performance, and even suicide.

A strategy that combines medication and psychosocial treatment in optimal for managing the disorder over time.

Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral Palsy is a collection of motor disorders that are the result of damage to the brain that occurs before, during, or after birth. The damage to the brain may cause poor coordination, poor balance, or abnormal movement patterns. It is a static disorder meaning that it will not worsen with time. Children with cerebral palsy may also have other medical problems that are mostly neurological such as epilepsy, mental retardation, learning disabilities, and ADHD.

Cerebral Palsy cannot be cured, but treatment plans are often highly effective. Some approaches that can be included in this plan are drugs to control seizures and muscle spasms, special braces to compensate for muscle imbalance, surgery, mechanical aids to help overcome impairments, counseling for emotional and psychological needs, and physical, occupational, speech, and behavioral therapy. In general, the earlier treatment begins, the better chance a child has of overcoming developmental disabilities or learning new ways to accomplish difficult tasks.

Cystic Fibrosis

Cystic Fibrosis is an inherited chronic disease that affects the lungs and digestive system. A defective gene and its protein cause the body to produce unusually thick, sticky mucus that: clogs the lungs and leads to life-threatening lung infections,; and obstructs the pancreas and stops natural enzymes from helping the body break down and absorb food. Symptoms include: very salty-tasting skin; persistent coughing, at times with phlegm; frequent lung infections; wheezing or shortness of breath; poor growth/weight gain in spite of a good appetite; frequent greasy, bulky stools or difficulty in bowel movements. The defective gene that is responsible for causing cystic fibrosis is on chromosome 7.

Currently, there is no cure for cystic fibrosis. However, specialized medical care, aggressive drug treatments, and therapies along with proper CF nutrition, can lengthen and improve the quality of life for those with CF.

Down Syndrome

Down Syndrome occurs when an individual has three, rather than two, copies of the 21st chromosomes. This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down Syndrome. All people with Down Syndrome experience cognitive delays, but the effect is usually mild to moderate and is not indicative of the many strengths and talents that each individual possesses.

Quality educational programs, a stimulating home environment, good health care, and positive support from family, friends and the community enable people with Down Syndrome to develop their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a condition where recurrent electrical discharges in the brain disturb the normal functioning of the nervous system (these are called seizures). Seizures may involve a temporary loss of consciousness or temporary changes in behavior. The exact changes of behavior depend on the area of the brain which is being stimulated by the electrical discharge.

Treatments consist of medication therapy and surgery.

Mental Retardation

Mental Retardation is a development disorder. A child with mental retardation performs significantly below their age level in intelligence and in the ability to act independently and get along well in social situations.

Causes of mental retardation may occur before birth (genetics, early birth defects, alcohol, maternal infections, pregnancy problems), during birth (fetal oxygen deprivation, prematurity), and after birth (infections, head injuries, tumors, lead poisoning).

Development and learning is not impossible, it is just accomplished at a much slower rate than normal.

Lupus

Lupus is an autoimmune disease that can affect various parts of the body, including the skin, joints, heart, lungs, blood, kidneys and brain. The immune system cannot tell the difference between foreign substances and its own cells and tissues. The immune system then makes antibodies directed against itself. These antibodies cause inflammation, pain, and damage in various parts of the body.

Symptoms include: achy joints, fever of more than 100 degrees D, arthritis/swollen joints, prolonged or extreme fatigue, skin rashes, anemia, kidney involvement, pain in the chest on deep breathing, butterfly-shaped rash across the cheeks and nose, sun or light sensitivity, hair loss, abnormal blood clotting, fingers turning white and/or blue in the cold, seizures, mouth or nose ulcers.

Preventive measures can reduce the risk of flares. A thorough medical evaluation and ongoing medical supervision are essential to ensure proper diagnosis and treatment. A cure for lupus has not yet been developed, and people do die from the disease, but not always.

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash called erythema migrans. If left untreated, infections can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system. Lyme disease is diagnosed based on symptoms, physical findings (e.g., rash), and the possibility of exposure to infected ticks; laboratory testing is helpful in the later stages of disease.

Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics. Steps to prevent Lyme disease include using insect repellant, removing ticks promptly, landscaping, and integrated pest management. The ticks that transmit Lyme disease can occasionally transmit other tick-borne diseases as well.

Multiple Sclerosis

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a potentially debilitating disease in which your body's immune system eats away at the protective sheath that covers your nerves. This interferes with the communication between your brain and the rest of your body. Ultimately, this may result in deterioration of the nerves themselves, a process that's not reversible.

Symptoms vary widely, depending on the amount of damage and which particular nerves are affected. People with severe cases of multiple sclerosis may lose the ability to walk or speak. Multiple sclerosis can be difficult to diagnose early in the course of the disease, because symptoms often come and go – sometimes disappearing for months. There is no cure for multiple sclerosis. Treatment typically focuses on combating the autoimmune response and managing the symptoms through therapy and medication.

Muscular Dystrophy

Muscular Dystrophy is characterized as a group of more than 30 genetic diseases that are characterized by progressive weakness and degeneration of the skeletal muscles that control movement. Muscular dystrophy (MD) is a group of inherited muscle diseases in which muscle fibers are unusually susceptible to damage. Muscles, primarily voluntary muscles, become progressively weaker. Symptoms include: muscle weakness, lack of coordination, and progressive crippling.

There is no specific treatment to stop or reverse any form of MD. Treatment may include physical therapy. Respiratory therapy, speech therapy, orthopedic appliances used for support, and corrective orthopedic surgery. Drug therapy includes corticosteroids to slow muscle degeneration, anticonvulsants to control seizures and some muscle activity, immunosuppressants to delay some damage to dying muscle cells, and antibiotics to fight respiratory infections. Some individuals may benefit from occupational therapy and assistive technology. Some patients may need assisted ventilation to treat respiratory muscle weakness and a pacemaker for cardiac abnormalities.

Prader-Willi Syndrome

Prader-Willi syndrome is caused by an important piece of genetic coding being missed from paternal chromosome 15. Characteristics and disabilities include: low muscle tone, immature sexual development, obesity, similar facial characteristics, excessive appetite, short stature, tiredness, emotional instability, adverse reactions to drugs, prolonged drowsiness after anesthesia, irregular body thermostat, high pain threshold, easy bruising, lack of vomiting, visual impairments, curvature of the spine, skin problems, delayed puberty, dental and oral problems, diabetes, speech and language problems, temper tantrums, stubbornness, resistance to change, obsessive or compulsive behavior, possessiveness, perseveration, skin picking, and immature social skills.

People with Prader-willi syndrome must have a supervised diet because their appetite is so excessive and they have weight control issues: the major medical concern morbid obesity.

Sickle-Cell Anemia

Sickle cell anemia is a serious disease in which the body makes sickle-shaped red blood cells. “Sickle-shaped” means that the red blood cells are shaped like a “C”. The most common symptom is feeling tired or weak. Sudden pain throughout the body may also occur, often resulting in organ damage.

Sickle cell anemia has no widely available cure. However, treatments can help relieve symptoms and treat complications.

Spina Bifida

Spina Bifida means split spine. Spina bifida occurs when the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord) of a developing baby doesn't form normally at some point along its length. It can occur anywhere in between the brain and the end of the spinal cord. Messages pass up and down the spinal cord carrying information between the brain and all areas of the body. When the spinal cord is not completely formed, these messages cannot be sent or received form areas below the spina bifida. As a result several body systems cannot function properly. Abnormal function may occur in the brain, spinal cord, kidneys, bladder, bones, or muscles. People with spina bifida may also have fractures, seizures, eye problems, early puberty, latex allergy, or skin problems. Spina Bifida is not one condition; it is a multitude of problems that affect the mind, body, and the spirit. No two cases of Spina Bifida are ever the same.

People with spina bifida need ongoing care for their lifetime. Treatment usually involves surgery, though not always.

Tourette Syndrome

Tourette Syndrome is a physical disorder of the brain which causes involuntary movements and involuntary vocalizations. It can occur in any part of the body, and includes eye blinking, facial grimacing, shoulder shrugging, head jerking, hand movements, throat clearing, sniffing, making loud sounds, grunting, or saying words.

Although the basic cause of Tourette Syndrome is unknown, current research suggests that there is an abnormality in the gene(s) affecting the brain's metabolism of neurotransmitters. TS is mostly a genetic disorder, although there has been some sporadic cases.

Medications are available when tourette syndrome interferes with functioning. Psychotherapy and counseling can assist a person with TS and some behavior therapies can teach the substitution of one tic for another that is more acceptable. The use of relaxation techniques and/or biofeedback may serve to alleviate stress reactions that cause tics to increase.