



Autism Assessment Information Sheet

Parent Guide



What is an Autism Assessment?

An autism assessment is a valuable, empowering process that provides insight into an individual's unique strengths, learning style, and areas where they may benefit from additional support. Psychologists approach the assessment with respect for each person's individuality, seeking to understand how they experience the world. This process involves structured observations, conversations, and supportive testing to help uncover how someone communicates, interacts, and engages with their environment.



Far from being just a diagnostic step, an autism assessment celebrates diversity and helps each person recognize their unique capabilities. The goal is not only to identify challenges but to highlight strengths, fostering a deeper understanding of oneself. With this clarity, individuals can access resources, build on their abilities, and create a life that aligns with their personal needs and aspirations.

What is included in an Autism Assessment at The Psychiatry & Therapy Centre?

- 1 Introductory consultation session with client (AQ-10 questionnaire). **One hour with one clinician.**
- 2 Semi- structured Interview developmental history taking with parents/caregivers/immediate family member (DSM-5 ASD PARENT INTERVIEW, ADI-R and GARS-3). **One hour with one clinician.**
- 3 Questionnaires sent to relevant persons (**optional**)
- 4 ADOS-2 observational assessment. **One hour with two clinicians.**
- 5 Psychiatric assessment. **One hour with one Psychiatrist**



6

Multi-disciplinary clinical meeting to discuss findings and determine diagnosis. **All clinical staff.**

7

Comprehensive report writing.

8

Feedback meeting to client and family. **Half an hour with two clinicians.**

Understanding your assessment

Who will carry out the assessment?

In your child's autism assessment, a team of professionals with different areas of expertise will work together to create a well-rounded understanding of your child's needs. According to DHA (Dubai Health Authority) guidelines, this team includes specific qualified specialists to ensure a comprehensive and high-quality assessment.

Typically, a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist will lead the evaluation, providing insights into emotional and behavioral aspects. Alongside specialised psychotherapists assessing communication skills and language development, and sensory and motor skills. These specialists each play a unique role, assessing different areas that are relevant to autism.

The DHA guidelines ensure that these assessments are thorough and follow best practices, requiring the use of standardized tools like the ADOS-2. DHA also emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach, meaning these professionals collaborate and share their observations to provide a holistic understanding of your child's strengths, needs, and unique traits.

This team effort is all about creating a supportive, accurate, and personalized assessment that respects your child's individuality and helps guide you and your child toward meaningful support and resources.

What is the introductory consultation and why is it important?

Autism is a spectrum, and each person has unique traits, strengths, and challenges. An introductory consultation is a crucial first step as it sets the foundation for a more accurate assessment and gets to know your child. At The Psychiatry and Therapy Centre we understand the importance of providing Neurodiversity affirming care and have specialist clinicians in this field to conduct these sessions. Within the first meeting, the clinician will help establish communication preferences, interaction styles and gather information on subtle behaviours of the client.

Most importantly, the introductory consultation is to build rapport. As it can be anxiety provoking going in for an assessment or meeting with a clinician for the first time, this initial session will allow the clinician to create a trusting space which will help to reduce stress and encourage openness and ease.



We understand the importance of collecting information from other key people in your child's life. With your consent, questionnaires will be sent for people to fill out on your behalf to help gather information. These questionnaires could be sent to: Teachers, SENCO, school counsellors, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, colleagues, therapists, psychiatrists and family doctors.

What is developmental history taking?

Developmental history taking is a crucial part of assessing autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It involves gathering comprehensive information about the person's developmental milestones and behaviours throughout their life. It will also gather information on social development, communication skills and behavioral patterns. This will be constructed through interview style questions which are from the DSM-5 ASD Parent interview, ADI-R or GARS-3.



The DSM-5 is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Illnesses, this is

the latest edition of the American Psychiatric Association's professional reference book on mental health and brain-related conditions. The DSM-5 ASD Parent Interview questions are adapted from a number of sources including the ADI-R, the Parent Interview for Autism – Clinical Version, the First Year Inventory the Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales Developmental Profile Caregiver Questionnaire, the CARS-2 Questionnaire for Parents or Caregivers and the CDRC Autism Interview.

The GARS-3 is the Gilliam Autism Rating Scale | Third Edition (GARS-3). It is one of the most widely used instruments for the assessment of autism spectrum disorder in the world. The GARS-3 assists teachers, parents, and clinicians in identifying autism in individuals and estimating its severity.

The ADI-R is the Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised and includes a structured developmental interview with the parents of individuals who have been referred for the evaluation of possible autism or autism spectrum disorders.



What is an ADOS-2 observational assessment?

The ADOS-2 (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition) is a well-regarded assessment tool used to help identify autism spectrum characteristics. It provides a supportive and structured setting where a trained professional observes social interaction, communication, and behaviour to gain a clearer understanding of how an individual experiences and engages with the world.

During the ADOS-2, your child will participate in various tasks, like conversation, play, and problem-solving activities, depending on age and developmental level. These activities are designed to feel natural and allow the assessor to see patterns in communication, social interaction, and responses to sensory input. The ADOS-2 is often just one part of a larger assessment process and works alongside other tools to form a complete picture.

The goal is to identify strengths as well as areas where extra support may be helpful. An ADOS-2 assessment is about understanding individual needs,

empowering you and your child with information, guiding next steps toward meaningful support and resources.

Why does the assessment include meeting with a psychiatrist?

A psychiatric assessment is a valuable part of your child's autism assessment, helping us build a complete and personalized understanding of your child's mental health and well-being. Autism often coexists with other conditions, like anxiety, depression, or ADHD, which can impact your day-to-day experiences and quality of life. By including this evaluation, we're ensuring we see the full picture of your child's strengths, needs, and the unique ways they interact with the world.



This assessment gives your child a chance to express any challenges or areas where they might want additional support, so we can make recommendations that are genuinely helpful. The goal is to create a holistic and supportive plan that considers all aspects of your child's mental health, allowing us to offer resources and guidance that are aligned with your child's personal goals and values. Ultimately, we want your child to feel understood and supported as your child moves forward with a clearer, more empowering perspective on their strengths and needs.

What is a multi-disciplinary clinical meeting and why is it important?

A multidisciplinary clinical meeting is an important step in the autism assessment process, where professionals from different backgrounds come together to discuss the results and insights gathered from the evaluation. This team may include psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, assistant psychologists and sometimes other specialists, depending on your child's needs. Each professional brings their unique

perspective, contributing observations and findings from their specific area of expertise. By working together, they ensure that every aspect of your child's strengths, challenges, and experiences are fully understood.

This collaborative approach allows the team to create a well-rounded understanding of your child's needs and to make more tailored recommendations for support and resources. The goal of a multidisciplinary meeting is to build a supportive, personalized plan that empowers your child. It's all about providing a comprehensive, thoughtful pathway forward that considers your child's unique qualities, preferences, and goals.

What will be included in my written report?

An autism assessment report is a comprehensive document that brings together all the information gathered during the assessment process. This report typically includes detailed observations, test results, and insights from each specialist involved. It starts with background information, such as developmental history and any relevant medical or educational details, to provide context.



The report then outlines findings in key areas, like social communication, behaviour, sensory responses, and any specific strengths or challenges identified. It may also include results from standardized tools, such as the ADOS-2, which help to create a clearer picture of how autism characteristics might apply to your child. Summary of the psychiatric evaluation will be included, highlighting any coexisting conditions, like anxiety or ADHD, that may need attention.

The final section of the report focuses on recommendations, offering personalized guidance on supports, therapies, or resources that align with your child's needs and goals. This could include suggestions for therapeutic services, community resources, or strategies to support day-to-day well-being. Ultimately, the report is designed to empower your child with a clear, compassionate understanding of themselves and a roadmap for meaningful support moving forward.



What can I expect from my feedback meeting?

The feedback meeting is the final part of the autism assessment process, where you meet with the professionals involved to discuss the results of your child's evaluation in a clear, supportive way. During this meeting, the assessment team will go over their findings with you, explaining any specific strengths, challenges, and patterns observed. They will also review the conclusions of the report and how they reached them, answering any questions you may have along the way.

This meeting is designed to help you understand the assessment results in depth, including any diagnosis made and its meaning in your child's life. Most importantly, the team will discuss personalized recommendations, focusing on resources, therapies, or strategies that may be beneficial.

The feedback meeting is your opportunity to ask questions, clarify information, and discuss how you feel about the results. Intended to empower your child with knowledge and a clear, actionable plan moving forward, with the support of the assessment team as they start their next steps.

