



Institute  
and Faculty  
of Actuaries

# Autism and me

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## I think I'm autistic – how do I get a diagnosis?

You may be reading this wondering if you are autistic. Perhaps you've read something about autism, or seen a programme on TV, and think it describes some of your own experiences.

It's quite common for people to go through life without an autism diagnosis, feeling that somehow they don't quite fit in. Many people learn to cope with life in their own way, although this can be difficult.

It's up to you whether you decide to seek a diagnosis. Some people are happy to remain undiagnosed clinically but to identify themselves as autistic (often referred to as 'self-diagnosed'). The only way to know for sure whether you are autistic is to get a formal assessment by a qualified professional.

Some people see a formal diagnosis as an unhelpful label, but for many getting a timely and thorough assessment and diagnosis may be helpful because:

- It may help you (and your family, partner, employer, colleagues and friends) to understand why you may experience certain difficulties and what you can do about them
- It may correct a previous misdiagnosis and mean that any mental health problems can be better addressed
- It may help you to get access to appropriate services and benefits
- You will be entitled to have reasonable adjustments made by your employer, college or university
- Although you don't need to be diagnosed to identify as autistic, some autistic people welcome the diagnosis as a way of making sense of their life experiences and validating their feelings of identifying with other autistic people.

The main route for obtaining a referral for a diagnostic assessment is through your GP.

For further information on how to get a diagnosis, please visit [Pre-diagnosis support - a guide for adults who think they might be autistic](#)

## I am autistic – should I disclose my diagnosis?

It's often hard to understand the benefits and drawbacks of disclosing your autism diagnosis. You may be thinking about whether your friends, family and work colleagues will understand and react to your disclosure in a positive way.

### Benefits

- Your friends and colleagues may understand you better
- Employers are legally obliged to support you and make reasonable adjustments for you at work.

### Risks

- You may be met with a lack of understanding from other people
- You may be worried about prejudice from a potential employer or client.

## How do I decide what to do?

There's no right or wrong answer to this question. If you do decide to tell people you are autistic, you could try writing a list of benefits and drawbacks of doing so beforehand. You can ask a friend or family member to help and list your strengths and potential difficulties. This may help you identify how people can support you and what adjustments could be made if you are disclosing to your employer. You should also decide what is helpful and not helpful for other people to know.

## How to tell other people about your diagnosis

For further information on disclosing your diagnosis, please visit [Disclosing your autism - a guide for autistic adults](#).



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