



### **Digital Autism Disorder**

The symptoms of *\*Digital Autism Disorder\** are similar to autism but the primary cause is excessive use of television and mobile devices by young children. Children who are exposed to these screens for several hours a day before the age of three, either for entertainment or education, experience disruptions in their communication skills and exhibit autism-like symptoms. This phenomenon is known as *\*Digital Autism Syndrome\** and has become increasingly common

### **Digital Nannyng**

Parents of these children have learned to use digital devices as a pacifier for calming irritable children. This results in the child failing to learn how to regulate their behavior and emotions

## Causes

**Difficult Temperaments:** Children with difficult\* temperaments from birth—those who have trouble sleeping, eating, or are often fussy—are more prone to developing Digital Autism Disorder. Their challenging behavior gives parents more reason to resort to television, iPads, and mobile phones to calm them down

**Environment:** Being in an environment where digital devices are promoted as tools for entertainment and growth, without adequate awareness of their dangers, can contribute to this disorder. Some parents mistakenly believe that digital tools are their children's teachers and caregivers

**Lack of Parental Skills:** Parents who lack sufficient skills to entertain or calm their child's emotions may use digital noise or cartoons to make the child eat or sleep. Even having a television on in the background negatively impacts the child's brain

**Lack of Support:** Nowadays, both parents often have to work, and unlike in the past, grandparents are not always available to help, with digital devices taking their place

**Critical Developmental Stage:** The first two years of a child's life are crucial for sensory-motor development. Children need to explore their environment, touch objects, and experience the world around them. When parents sit them in front of a television instead, their natural development is stunted, leading to symptoms of autism

### **Treatment**

To treat Digital Autism, the first and most immediate step is to remove all digital devices from the child's access

Immediately after removing digital tools, parents should spend two months interacting directly with the child, maintaining eye contact from the moment the child wakes up until they go to sleep. This direct parent-child interaction is necessary to bring the child back to reality

Parents need to play, live, and talk with the child, especially teaching them to make eye contact. It is recommended that if one parent becomes tired, the other should continue the interaction. This process is likened to putting a broken hand in a cast to heal—constant, uninterrupted connection with the parents and close relatives for two months is essential

for the child's recovery

If a child with Digital Autism Disorder is not treated, they may fall into the autism spectrum and face a challenging future

According to digital autism therapists, watching television and using mobile devices should be absolutely prohibited for the maximum 10 to 12. From ages 12 children under the age of 18 screen time should be limited to one hour per day, with a parent present to discuss the content, preventing the child from losing touch with reality and other people

### **Best Time for Treatment**

If a child with Digital Autism Disorder is treated before the age of 12 they have a better chance of recovery compared to the age of 18 those who are treated later

### **Symptoms of Digital Autism**

Many symptoms of Digital Autism are similar to those of autism, and without a lifestyle assessment by a specialist, a child with Digital Autism Disorder may be misdiagnosed with autism

Children who displayed normal behavior in the early months after birth but developed the following symptoms after exposure to television and mobile devices may have Digital Autism

Impaired social interactions: The child may show no interest in playing with peers and may feel alienated even from family members. Conversely, they may approach strangers without being able to assess social threats

Lack of eye contact with parents and others

No response when called by name

Failure to follow others' hand gestures

Objects become more important to the child than relationships with people

Staring at walls or specific spots for long periods

Repetitive behaviors

Delayed communication skills, even if the child knows a

vocabulary of 200 words learned from cartoons in any language

Short attention span

### **Differences Between Digital Autism and Autism**

The symptoms of Digital Autism are less severe compared to autism

These symptoms emerged after exposure to digital devices, whereas a child with autism would have exhibited symptoms regardless of such exposure

A child with Digital Autism can quickly return to normal behavior after a two-month intensive treatment, unlike a child with autism

### **Post-Digital Detox Symptoms**

When parents become aware of the dangers of television and mobile use and remove these devices, the child with Digital Autism starts to show signs of restlessness, side glances, and spinning around. The child may squint and stare at lights and moving signs, which is attributed to their habit of being attracted to the bright lights and sounds in cartoons

## **Increasing Rates**

One of the reasons for the rising rates of autism in recent decades is attributed to children's use of television and mobile devices. The lack of awareness in this area has put many children at risk of developing Digital Autism Disorder and, subsequently, autism

## **Digital Autism Testing on Mice**

Mice, genetically closest to humans, share 95% of their genes with us. To understand the impact of digital tools on behavior, scientists exposed baby mice to the light and sound of television for several hours a day. After twenty days, the baby mice began to exhibit behaviors consistent with Digital Autism

## **The Need for Awareness**

Three research centers in the US, Canada, and Iran have been established to study Digital Autism. All three centers prioritize raising awareness as the first step in preventing the widespread impact of this disorder

All of us who are aware of the harms of digital usage and do not spread awareness will be partially responsible for the future difficulties faced by digital children