

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH



Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how an individual with ASD looks that sets them apart from other individuals, however they may communicate, behave, and learn in ways that are different from other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of individuals with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Additionally, some individuals need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.

Individuals with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. ASD also impacts ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person's life. Early intervention and recognition can positively impact and individuals development.



Highlight on Safety for Individuals with Autism

Similar to wandering behaviors in seniors with dementia or Alzheimer's, individuals with Autism are prone to wandering away from a safe environment. Wandering is the tendency for an individual to try to leave the safety of a responsible person's care or a safe area, which can result in potential harm or injury. This might include running off from adults at school or in the community, leaving the classroom without permission, or leaving the house when the family is not looking. Individuals with autism have challenges with social and communication skills and safety awareness. This makes wandering a potentially dangerous behavior.



Safety Tips for Wandering

1. Secure your home: fenced in yards, door and window alarms, or visuals like stop signs on exits.
2. Consider a tracking device: there are multiple resources for determining if a tracking device is right for you.
3. Consider an ID bracelet: medical ID bracelets or temporary tattoos can be a valuable when traveling with individuals who are prone to wander.
4. Alert your neighbors: knowing your neighbors can help reduce risks of wandering
5. Alert First Responders: providing first responders with key information before an incident occurs may improve response.



Featured Health Alert

Urinary Tract Infections



Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are the second most common infection found in the body. The infections may appear in the lower urinary tract, the bladder and the urethra. Serious UTIs may appear in the kidneys and cause wide-spread infection. If the symptoms are not recognized, a UTI can quickly become an infection that spreads in the body causing sepsis or septicemia. If left untreated, sepsis can cause hospitalization or worse, death.

Risk Factors include but are not limited to

- Individuals with spinal cord injuries
- Individuals with diabetes
- History of urinary tract infections
- Individuals with tubes or catheters placed in the urethra and bladder
- Women are at a greater risk for developing a UTI than men

Preventive Measures

1. Stay hydrated, this helps dilute the urine allowing the flushing of the bacteria with more frequent urination.
2. Clean from front to back when performing toileting care as this decreases the spread of bacteria
3. Avoid the use of female sprays and powders unless directed by a doctor

For more health and safety alerts, please visit our website at www.dbhds.virginia.gov and select Office of Integrated Health under Professionals and Service Providers.



With the change in seasons from winter to spring, the flowers bloom and insects arrive.

Do you care for an individual with a life threatening allergy to insects, like bees? If so, now is a great time to check prescriptions for life saving medications such as epinephrine, commonly known as an EpiPen. Make an appointment with a medical provider to renew prescriptions if necessary!



In the healthcare setting, we often hear the term protocol used when discussing the needs of individuals. A protocol is a set of instructions which describe a process to be followed to provide care or medical intervention for an individual.

Protocols are developed with an individual's healthcare provider, and/or medical team, and includes what to do if an individual experiences a medical event such as a seizure. A doctor should review and sign the plan. Have this plan reviewed at least annually. Also, keep protocols available and assure anyone who provides support has read and understands it.

Keep Calm and Follow Protocol