

10 THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA) THERAPY FOR AUTISM

Steven Merahn MD, FAAP Chief Medical Officer

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Autism can be more complex than many other disabilities or developmental problems, such as language delay or attention-deficit disorder. Autism-related disabilities can affect a child's capacity for communication, social interaction, and behavior.

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Due to this complexity, children with autism may require higher levels of treatment intensity, consistency and family involvement to achieve and sustain skills and developmental progress.

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The most successful evidence-based form of therapy for autism is intensive behavioral intervention based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

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ABA is "dose-dependent," which means that a child with many needs or parents and caregivers with big goals may need more in-depth treatment. On the other hand, some children may benefit from less in-depth treatment, if needs are modest.

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Treatment plans should incorporate parent input. Make sure your child's therapist knows your hopes, dreams and aspirations for your child and incorporates them into the treatment goals.

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ABA is about helping your child learn new skills and advance developmentally. Many of the goals are broken down into much smaller parts and then put together, like puzzle pieces, so the child can accomplish a bigger goal.

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Treatment plans are based on a thorough assessment. A treatment provider will conduct an interview and assessment of your child and create a treatment plan that outlines the goals for your child's progress. This treatment plan is submitted to your insurance company to begin treatment services.

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Once the insurance payer approves treatment services, your child's treatment team will work with you to start therapy. In order to be most effective, therapy can often occur for up to 40 hours per week. It's important that you keep to the schedule as much as possible, even during vacations or school breaks.

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Treatment takes place in 6-month treatment cycles. At the end of every cycle, there is a review of progress and a reassessment and update of the child's treatment plan. The plan is constantly being improved to take advantage of your child's new skills. Most children need between 4 and 8 service periods to make significant developmental progress.

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Sometimes results won't be seen immediately. The most common reason for parent frustration is "lack of progress," so make sure you are involved in treatment planning so you can get an accurate understanding of expectations for each treatment cycle.