

Questions to Ask an Autism Clinician

Thinking about an autism assessment?

Autism assessments can look quite different depending on the clinician, country and assessment approach. Finding someone who understands the diversity of autistic experiences can be particularly important, especially if you don't fit the stereotypical picture of autism. You don't need to ask every question on this list. Choose the questions that are most relevant to you.

About the clinician

- What qualifications do you have to assess autism?
- How much experience do you have assessing adults for autism?
- How often do you assess adults for autism?
- Do you have experience assessing women?
- Do you have experience with people who are diagnosed later in life?
- Do you have experience with people who have learned to mask or camouflage autistic traits?
- Do you have experience assessing people who may also have ADHD?

About the assessment

- What does your autism assessment process involve?
- How many appointments does the assessment usually involve?
- How long does the assessment take?
- What questionnaires or assessment tools do you use?
- Will you ask about my childhood as well as my current experiences?
- What kind of information will you need from me?
- Will I need someone who knew me as a child to provide information?
- What happens if I don't have access to someone who can provide childhood information?
- How do you assess autism when someone has developed strategies to mask or compensate for their difficulties?

Understanding different presentations

If you're concerned that you don't fit the stereotypical image of autism, you could ask:

- How do you account for differences in how autism can present in women?
- How do you consider masking or camouflaging?
- How do you distinguish autistic traits from anxiety or other experiences?

- How do you consider someone who appears to cope well externally but experiences significant difficulties internally?
- How do you consider sensory differences, routines, social communication and restricted or intense interests?
- How do you consider the impact of someone's environment on their ability to cope?

After the assessment

- How will you explain the assessment outcome to me?
- Will I receive a written report?
- What will the report include?
- If I receive an autism diagnosis, what happens next?
- Can you recommend appropriate supports or resources?
- Can you provide documentation that I can use when seeking further support?
- If you don't think I meet the criteria, will you explain why?
- Will you discuss other possible explanations for my experiences?
- Can I ask questions about the outcome after receiving the report?

Practical questions

If you're considering an online assessment, you might want to ask:

- Is the assessment entirely online?
- Is an online diagnosis accepted by the services or organisations I may want to access?
- Would I need an in-person assessment for any particular support?
- What happens if you recommend further assessment?
- What is the total cost?
- Are there any additional costs?

It's okay to ask questions about the assessment provider

Unfortunately, not every service offering an assessment will have the same level of experience or approach. Before booking, you can ask about the clinician's qualifications, registration, experience and assessment process. Be cautious of anyone who seems to promise a diagnosis before properly assessing you, or who doesn't clearly explain what their assessment involves. You deserve to be listened to and taken seriously.

My own assessment experience was very positive because I felt that my clinician genuinely listened to my experiences and understood that autism can present differently in different people. But my experience won't necessarily be the same as someone else's, and assessment processes vary between clinicians and countries.

This resource is for information and reflection only. Assessment processes vary between clinicians and countries. It is not a substitute for professional advice or diagnosis.