

**SPECIAL REPORTS**

# Autism and the coronavirus pandemic

BY SPECTRUM

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The coronavirus pandemic is altering autism research in unprecedented ways. It also has had a huge impact on the diagnosis and treatment of the condition. This special report wraps up *Spectrum's* coverage so far on the myriad reverberations of the virus within the autism community.

In the academic world, **conferences have been cancelled** and labs have put clinical trials on hold, **moved their efforts online** or **shuttered altogether**. Scientific journals are **extending deadlines** for authors and editors, and the U.S. National Institutes of Health is similarly granting researchers **greater flexibility** in their applications, budgets and progress reports. Scientists are **redesigning some studies** for a socially distanced world. Clinicians, meanwhile, are rethinking how to **screen for autism** and offer therapy remotely.

For some people on the spectrum, life in lockdown is **aggravating anxiety** and other autism traits. Women and children with autism, and those **living in group homes**, seem **particularly hard hit** by the pandemic, although the **experiences of autistic people** have been almost as varied as the condition itself.

This special report also includes **advice for families** on **managing lockdown** from researchers and advocates, and calls for **maintaining disability services** and **disability rights** during the crisis. In a **podcast** and two webinars, you can listen to autistic people, **clinicians** and **researchers** discuss the pandemic and their experiences.