

## Autism Awareness Week

3-7 April 2017

*Raising understanding and awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorders*

Sunday April 2<sup>nd</sup> celebrated World Autism Awareness Day and is followed by Autism New Zealand Awareness week.

Autism Awareness Week's goal is to shine a bright light on autism, increasing knowledge of autism and the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention.

It celebrates the unique talents and skills of people with autism and is a week where individuals with autism are warmly welcomed and embraced in community events.

Autism New Zealand <https://www.autismnz.org.nz/> has knowledgeable, professional staff who work daily with children and adults with autism and their support networks. Their main role is 'essentially empowering people living with autism'.

### What is Autism and Aspergers Syndrome?

Autism New Zealand's description is:

*"Children and adults who have an autism spectrum disorder look the same as other people, and due to the invisible nature of their disability it can be much harder to create awareness and understanding*

*Autism and Asperger syndrome still remain relatively unknown disabilities among the general population.*

*Yet it is estimated that autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are approximately four times as common as cerebral palsy and 17 times as common as Down's syndrome. ASD affects 1 in 66 people, approximately 65,000 New Zealanders, which is equivalent to the entire region of Otago."*

**The following are some wonderful audio links around Autism which are well worth a listen:**

- **A new way to diagnose autism - Ami Klin (Autism Researcher) on [TED talk](#)**

Early diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder can improve the lives of everyone affected, but the complex network of causes make it incredibly difficult to predict. Ami Klin describes a new early detection method that uses eye-tracking technologies to gauge babies' social engagement skills and reliably measure their risk of developing autism.

- **'Autism Research - Dr Javier Virues-Ortega' on [Radio New Zealand](#).**

There's no known cause ... and no cure. Autism remains one of the most complex disorders for researchers to tackle. But what if we could see inside the brains of sufferers to see if therapies are actually reshaping them? That's what a New Zealand team plans to do. It's a world-first study combining the latest behavioural science with cutting-edge functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) technology.

