

# Safety & Autism Spectrum Disorder: DID YOU KNOW?

Almost half (49%) of children with autism spectrum disorder attempt to wander from a safe environment, a rate nearly four times higher than unaffected siblings<sup>1</sup>.



More than one third of children with autism spectrum disorder who wander are unable to communicate their name, address or phone number<sup>2</sup>.



Approximately 90% of wandering deaths of children with autism spectrum disorder are caused by accidental drowning<sup>3</sup>.



Missing children with autism spectrum disorder may: run away from a safe environment, have a diminished sense of fear leading them to engage in high-risk behaviour (e.g., seeks roadways or water) or seek out small or tightly enclosed spaces to conceal themselves<sup>4</sup>.

Many children with autism spectrum disorder have a limited understanding of the dangers associated with wandering, including drowning, traffic-related injuries, dehydration and hypothermia<sup>4</sup>.



Children with autism spectrum disorder often wander or bolt to get to something of special interest (e.g., water or a road sign), to get away from overwhelming stimuli (e.g., loud noises or bright lights) or to escape an unwanted activity<sup>4</sup>.



### Wandering types:

- Goal-directed (purpose of getting to something).
- Bolting/fleeing (suddenly running/bolting to get away from something).
- Other (nighttime wandering, boredom, disorientation or lost)<sup>4</sup>.

This sheet has been developed collaboratively by the following parties:



<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Connie, et al. "Occurrence and family impact of elopement in children with autism spectrum disorders." *Pediatrics* 130.5 (2012): 870-877.

Source: *Pediatrics Journal, Occurrence and Family Impact of Elopement in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

<sup>2</sup> Autism & Safety Facts." *National Autism Association*. Web. 2 Oct. 2015. <<http://nationalautismassociation.org/resources/autism-safety-facts/>>

<sup>3</sup> AWAARE — Autism Wandering Resources." *AWAARE Collaboration*. Web. 2 Oct. 2015. <<http://awaare.nationalautismassociation.org/>>

<sup>4</sup> Big Red Safety Toolkit." *National Autism Association*. Web. 2 Oct. 2015. <<http://nationalautismassociation.org/docs/BigRedSafetyToolkit-FR.pdf>>

# Safety & Autism Spectrum Disorder: **PREPARING TO RESPOND QUICKLY WHEN YOUR CHILD GOES MISSING**



## PREPARE:

Have information readily available about your child, including a recent photo. When going out to a public place, take a picture of your child with your smartphone so that you have a current photo on hand.

- Some schools utilize photography services to provide ID cards to students. A secondary card can be kept in your wallet in the event of an emergency.



## IDENTIFY DANGERS:

Keep a list of dangers in your community and other communities your child frequents. Identify bodies of water and high traffic areas<sup>1</sup>.



## IDENTIFY YOUR CHILD:

Even if your child is verbal, equipping them with an identifying bracelet or clothing label with their name and a phone number can help in an emergency. Help your child to understand the purpose of their ID tag and where it's located.



## ALERT:

Empower first responders, trusted neighbours, family, and educators by sharing what your child likes and dislikes. Alerting safe adults in your community to these special circumstances can help in quickly locating your child if they go missing<sup>1</sup>.



## RESPOND:

**If you become separated from your child or they have gone missing, contact your local police immediately.** If you are in a public place, contact security and share your child's most recent photo with those assisting in the search. **Always consider searching water sources first.**

- In Quebec, contact *Enfant Retour* at 1-888-692-4673. Elsewhere in Canada, contact the Canadian Centre for Child Protection's *MissingKids.ca* program at 1-866-KID-TIPS or visit [www.missingkids.ca](http://www.missingkids.ca) for additional resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Big Red Safety Toolkit.™ National Autism Association. Web. 2 Oct. 2015. <<http://nationalautismassociation.org/docs/BigRedSafetyToolkit-FR.pdf>>