**Mental health and autism spectrum conditions**

*Dr Eilidh Cage, Royal Holloway*

eilidh.cage@rhul.ac.uk

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**What is autism?**

- Autism is a life long **neurodevelopmental** condition, meaning the brain develops differently.
- The autism **spectrum** is made up of lots of different people who show the key characteristics of autism in different ways.

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**Mental health in autism: Facts and figures**

- 77% of young autistic adults followed up from childhood had mental health difficulties
- **Mood disorders** are the most common mental health difficulty
- Incidence of **depression** in autism could be as high as 34%
- Rates of **anxiety** much higher in those with autism compared to those without autism
- **Intolerance of uncertainty** could contribute to anxiety in autism
- Other co-occurring conditions include **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, panic disorder and agrophobia**

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**Autistic adolescents and mental health**

- Adolescence is from the start of puberty to when an individual has a stable adult role
- Adolescents with autism have to contend with the pressures of being a **teenager**, like their non-autistic peers
- One study found that autistic adolescents were as affected by **ostracism** as their non-autistic peers, feeling more anxious
- **Social anxiety** appears to be higher in autistic adolescents

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**Key characteristics**

- Social interaction difficulties
- Social communication difficulties
- Restricted & repetitive interests & behaviours
- Sensory sensitivities

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**References**