Autism

**Autism** is the most severe developmental disability. Appearing within the first three years of life, autism involves impairments in social interaction — such as being aware of other people’s feelings — and verbal and nonverbal communication.

Some people with autism have limited interests, strange eating or sleeping behaviors or a tendency to do things to hurt themselves, such as banging their heads or biting their hands.

Obesity

**Obesity** is a condition marked by excess accumulation of body fat. Genetic factors play a key role in obesity, but so do behavioral factors — especially eating too much and exercising too little.

Obesity can lead to diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea and other problems. In fact, some researchers believe that obesity is second only to smoking as a preventable cause of death.

Children

**Children** sometimes need psychological help, just like adults do. Treatment typically begins when parents, teachers or school counselors notice that children aren’t functioning as well as they could. Psychologists can help children cope with such problems as anxiety and depression, hyperactivity, conflicts with parents and stressful events like divorce or a parent’s death.