

GETTING ASSESSED · 3.10

ADI-R and ADOS-2: The Gold-Standard Autism Assessment Tools

ADI-R and ADOS-2 are the two gold-standard autism assessment tools. This summary explains what each one measures, what they involve, and what they do and do not do on their own.

FOR

Adults and parents preparing for autism assessment

AUDIENCE AGE

All ages

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

ADI-R and ADOS-2: The Gold-Standard Autism Assessment Tools

What each tool does

- **ADOS-2: direct observation.** A structured set of activities and conversations led by a trained clinician. Lasts around 45 to 60 minutes. The clinician scores observed behaviours such as social communication and restricted or repetitive patterns. There is no pass or fail.
- **ADI-R: developmental interview.** A structured interview with a parent or someone who knew the patient in childhood. Lasts around 90 to 120 minutes. Captures the developmental history that DSM-5-TR requires for an autism diagnosis.
- **Two tools, two different jobs.** ADOS-2 looks at how social communication is organised now. ADI-R looks at the historical pattern. Used together with the wider clinical interview, they triangulate the diagnostic picture.

Important caveats

- **Neither tool diagnoses autism on its own.** The diagnosis comes from the clinical synthesis of ADOS-2, ADI-R, the wider interview, sensory profile and informant input.
- **ADOS-2 can underscore masking adults.** Particularly autistic women who have masked effectively for years. A below-threshold ADOS-2 in someone whose wider picture clearly fits autism does not rule out the diagnosis.
- **ADI-R depends on a reliable informant.** Usually a parent. Where a parent is not available, alternative developmental evidence is used: school reports, sibling memories, childhood photos and the patient's own recollections.
- **Tools support, but do not replace, the clinical interview.** NICE-aligned assessment uses these tools alongside a full clinical interview, sensory profile and differential diagnosis.

How we can help

- **Both tools as standard for adult autism assessment.** NeuroFX uses both the ADOS-2 and the ADI-R wherever a developmental informant is available. Where an informant is not available, we use alternative developmental evidence with the patient's input.
- **Paediatric assessment with age-appropriate modules.** ADOS-2 modules are chosen based on age and language. ADI-R is conducted with parents directly. The same NICE standard applies.
- **Combined ADHD and autism assessment.** Where a dual picture is suspected, NeuroFX assesses both conditions in the same pathway with the appropriate tools for each.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

If autism is on your mind for yourself or your child, NHS routes start with GP referral. NeuroFX offers private autism assessment using both the ADOS-2 and the ADI-R for adults and for children aged 6 and upwards. Seek same-day help via 111 (or 999 in an emergency) for any mental health crisis.

SOURCES

Lord et al. 2012 (ADOS-2); Rutter et al. 2003 (ADI-R); NICE CG142; NICE CG128; DSM-5-TR

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
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