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|  | Parents’ Stories |
|  | Dr Avril V Brereton and Dr Kerry J Bull |

**Abdullah and his family**

I took him for a check-up with the Maternal and Child Health Nurse when he was one and everything seemed okay. Then things stopped when he was about 18 months old.

He stopped talking and his behaviour changed. He used to talk and be aware of what was going on and what he wanted. He lost almost all the words he had. He didn’t like the same games and toys and just wanted to do the same thing over and over. When we got back from our holiday, we realised things had changed. It took us by surprise.

We went to the GP and he sent us to a paediatrician and a speech therapist. Abdullah was diagnosed with autism pretty soon after that. His speech has kicked in again now and he’s putting words together so we can see a lot of change in him lately. The speech therapist and his key worker at early intervention helped us and we get a lot of ideas from other parents too.

The emotional side is hard. It feels like a roller-coaster sometimes. I am so excited about anything new he learns, but then I feel sad all over again. And I worry that he will stop talking again. I lean on my mother pretty heavily. She’s been there every step of the way. She came with me for the assessment which was great.

My sister was devastated at first and wanted to know what it meant for her because she was pregnant. My father didn’t understand at first. He said ‘But he’s such a good boy. He can’t have autism’. It was fear of the unknown for my dad. They all understand better now and they help out where they can.

For more information about the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s Autism Friendly Learning website go to:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/autism](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/autism)