



Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)

INFORMATION SHEET



What is Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)?

PACT is a specific therapy program for autistic children, or children who have social-communication delays. PACT helps by empowering parents to understand and communicate more effectively with their child - enhancing the knowledge and skills of those who know the child best.

PACT therapists use specific video feedback techniques to help you recognise, respond to and enhance your child's communication. The aim is to improve communication by supporting you to embed communication techniques that are tailored to your child's individual strengths and needs into daily family life.

Throughout PACT, children are supported to develop their interaction and communication skills in their natural environment, which is one of the most effective ways of ensuring enduring improvements in social communication skills.

What is the time commitment?

Each PACT session is around 90 minutes. A PACT program is completed across 12 fortnightly sessions (for six months). Between sessions, you will practise PACT strategies daily during play with your child (for around 30 minutes a day). Monthly maintenance PACT sessions are available after the initial 12 sessions, to continue generalising the communication techniques into daily routines and other environments.



What does the research say?

PACT is an evidence-based therapy. It's one of the few autism programs to show long-term reduction in difficulties usually linked with autism 'severity'. In a large clinical trial (152 participants), pre-school children receiving PACT showed improvements in social communication and a reduction in the difficulties associated with repetitive behaviours and restricted interests. These changes were sustained into middle childhood, six years after the end of therapy.

In other studies, PACT has also been applied successfully in children up to 10 years of age and in culturally and linguistically diverse groups. The findings of research into PACT have been published internationally in peer reviewed journals and the studies have been recognised for their strong study design and scientific rigour.

When interpreting these research findings, it's important to note that while PACT targets improving social communication, it embraces differences and attributes. It focuses on realising individual potential instead of aiming to 'normalise' or 'mask' atypical behaviour; a valued priority reported within the autism community.

Can my child receive PACT at the same time as other therapies?

Yes, PACT works alongside other therapies. You may continue with any support you receive from other services whilst receiving PACT. PACT specifically addresses social communication needs and other supports may be needed to target other skills.

Who is PACT suitable for?

PACT is suitable for children aged 2-11 years experiencing social communication challenges. PACT has been found to be beneficial for children across a range of communication levels, including those children who have not yet developed verbal language, as well as those speaking fluently in sentences.

Who can provide PACT therapy?

PACT can be provided by therapists who have received PACT training and completed the certification process. The certification process is thorough and involves completion of training, as well as group and individual supervision until a therapist has sufficiently demonstrated the skills necessary to be PACT Certified. Seeing a PACT Certified therapist ensures that you are receiving the therapy in the same way as it was originally developed and researched. PACT clinicians are often Speech Pathologists, but may come from a range of professional backgrounds.

How can I get involved?

Families: CliniKids is currently taking enquiries from families who would like to receive PACT therapy (in-clinic or via telehealth). If you would like to register your interest or access further information, please contact us:

clinkids.reception@telethonkids.org.au or (08) 6319 1133.

Therapists: CliniKids provides PACT training and certification. If you are a therapist who would like to be trained in PACT, please contact us:

Clinikids.Training@telethonkids.org.au