

Family Education Sheet

Preparing for a Medical Appointment or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Evaluation



Boston Children's Hospital
Autism Spectrum Center

childrenshospital.org/
autismspectrumcenter

Whether you are coming to Boston Children's Hospital for an outpatient appointment, evaluation, a surgical procedure or an emergency visit, there are steps you can take to create a more positive experience for your child.

What should I bring?

Communication systems and devices

- **Bring your child's communication system or device** (for example: Dynavox, picture communication board, or iPad/tablet) to the appointment.
 - Even if your child can speak, the stress of a hospital visit can make it hard to communicate. Having these systems with you helps to make sure that your child can communicate with their medical team.

Distraction tools

Distraction items can help your child cope with a medical appointment.

- **Bring a favorite toy, sensory item, book or electronic device** (iPad or tablet)
- **Bring a set of headphones.** Headphones may be good for your child to wear if you are going to talk about sensitive issues with the health care provider.

Rewards or reinforcers

- **Bring items that you often use as rewards for your child in your home.** For example, if your child struggles with blood draws, it can be helpful to say "First blood draw, then a sticker."

Comfort items

If your child has favorite stuffed animal, blanket, or object, you can bring it. It may help to make the visit or stay more comfortable.

How can I prepare my child?

My Hospital Stories

- These are visual tools that give your child a sense of what may happen, what the hospital area may look like and what to expect.

- You can find My Hospital Stories here: <http://www.childrenshospital.org/patient-resources/family-resources/child-life-specialists/preparing-your-child-and-family-for-a-visit/my-hospital-story>.

Medication

Please give your child their medication as you normally would unless you are told otherwise by your provider's team.

Behavior support plan

- If your child often has a hard time with medical visits, you can **work with our team to develop a behavior support plan.** Call the Autism Spectrum Center at 617-355-7493 for help creating this plan.
- This plan will alert staff to your child's unique needs and preferences, including help with getting to a clinic, limiting the number of people in the room or providing distraction tools.

Child Life specialists

- Child Life Specialists use developmentally appropriate strategies and play to help support your child through medical procedures. The Autism Spectrum Center's Child Life Specialist can work with you to plan ahead for your visits, prepare for appointments and provide support on the day of the appointment.
- For more information, contact the Autism Spectrum Center's Child Life Specialist at 617-919-6390 or by e-mail at kristin.coffey@childrens.harvard.edu.

How can I prepare?

- Write down your questions and concerns **before** the visit to share with your child's provider.
- Give yourself more time than you think you need to get to the appointment.
- Ask for help if your child is having a difficult time—many departments or areas are able to offer accommodations.
- If possible, bring someone with you for support

This Family Education Sheet is available in [Spanish](#).