

ASERT FAQ Sheet

Preparing for a Hospital Visit



FAQ-015

ASERT is funded by the Bureau of Autism Services, PA Department of Human Services

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877-231-4244

A hospital can be an intimidating place for anyone, but the unfamiliar sights, smells, and sounds can be especially difficult to cope with for children with autism. In addition to the environment, a medical procedure or examination often involves poking and prodding by medical professionals or specialized equipment. Planning in advance can help hospital visits go more smoothly. The list below includes ideas for planning with your child.

- **Pretend play with doctor materials.** This can help your child become familiar with the tools that will be used during the procedure and help him or her feel more comfortable.
- **Role play the visit** with a doll or stuffed toy (if age appropriate). Allow the child to use the tools or practice the procedures that will occur during the visit or demonstrate them on a toy.
- **Let the individual pack items** for an overnight stay. Having access to familiar objects or toys can provide comfort in an unfamiliar environment.
- **Contact hospital staff** in advance about the care schedule. When preparing for an overnight stay, talk to staff about establishing a consistent care schedule. Knowing what to expect can help calm the individual.
- **Reassure them** that if something hurts, there are ways to help the pain and that going to the hospital does not mean they have done something wrong. Talking about things like medicine, relaxation, listening to music, and playing games as ways to help ease pain. Be sure to discuss this in advance to help calm fears.
- **Be honest** about what will happen and what may cause discomfort. Discuss this in advance, before you are in the hospital setting.
- **Create a visual schedule.** Work with hospital staff in advance to create a schedule with pictures to help make the day more predictable.
- **Schedule a visit or tour before your appointment** to become familiar with the setting. Work with hospital staff to plan this visit.

More Resources:

Autism Speaks Toolkit: <http://www.rchsd.org/documents/2015/03/autismspeakstoolkit.pdf>

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: <http://www.chop.edu/patients-and-visitors/what-expect-during-your-childsinpatient-visit/preparing-your-child-inpatient-visit#.VYRbHfIVhWM>

This Frequently Asked Questions Sheet was developed by the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT). For more information, please contact ASERT at 877-231-4244 or info@PAautism.org.