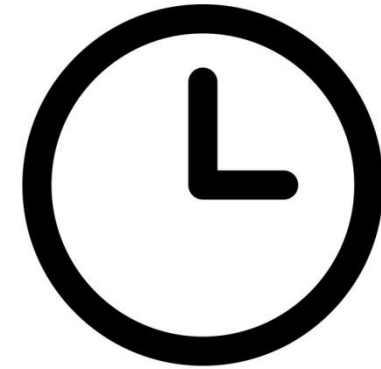


PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR A GP APPOINTMENT

Booking the appointment:

- ✓ Book the appointment at good time of day for your child or when the waiting room is likely to be quiet
- ✓ Ask for someone with experience of autism if possible
- ✓ Ask that your child be taken straight in rather than waiting
- ✓ Ask for a longer appointment time
- ✓ And ask for anything else you think may help your child!!



Before the GP appointment

- ✓ Talk to your child about what will happen. Use the social story included in this kit. Read the story to your child a few days before the appointment Repeat the story over the next few days to prepare your child.
- ✓ Help your child practice relaxing. This can help distract them. Use the visual supports in this pack to help them to understand what to do
- ✓ If possible take your child to the GP beforehand so they know where they are going and take some pictures to send to us to incorporate into your child's social story.
- ✓ Choose a reward for after the appointment– It should be something your child doesn't always have available and is different enough to be highly motivating.



Examples of relaxation techniques:

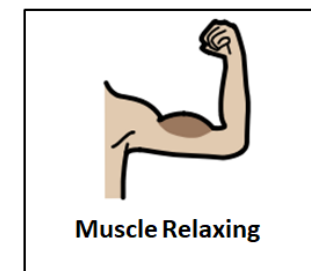
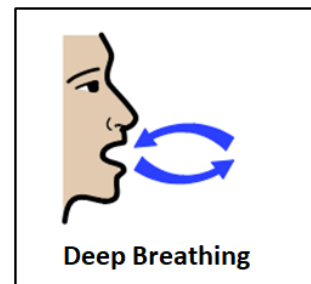
- ✓ Deep breathing – Get your child to practice by blowing bubbles. Try to encourage your child to take a deep breath, hold it for a few seconds and then release it
- ✓ Muscle relaxing – Get your child to relax by focusing on different muscles of the body and alternately tensing and relaxing them one at a time.
- ✓ Favourite toys/activities – Use these to distract your child before the procedure begins and before your child begins to become upset
- ✓ Music – Play your child's favourite music or sing a song
- ✓ Laughter – Find ways to make your child laugh



Tips for Using Relaxation and Distraction Parents

You may find that typical approaches to using relaxation are not always effective for children with Autism. Certain changes can be made in order to effectively use these strategies with your child

- Practice makes perfect. Try to teach relaxation strategies at scheduled times in the day instead of when your child is already anxious.
- Reward your child immediately after practicing relaxation. This adds another positive connection with relaxation. Later when you use these strategies because your child is worried, he or she will connect it with something positive.
- Try to use these strategies before your child becomes worried
- Use visual supports or concrete tools. It is important to use visual supports (for example, pictures) or other concrete cues while putting relaxation strategies in place. Use them as a quick reminder to your child that it is time to use these strategies.



Learning through play

Practicing medical procedures at home can really help to prepare your child with what to expect and reduce anxiety around medical instruments.

To role play GP appointment

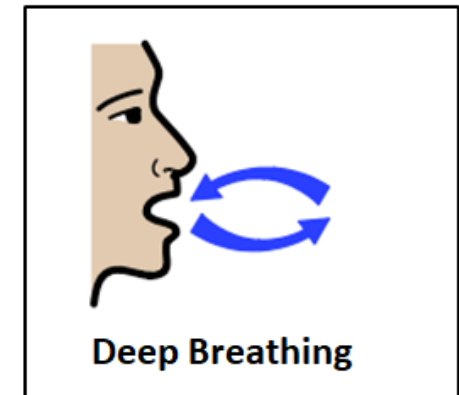
- Use a doll, teddy bear or another stuffed toy. Tell your child 'Dolly is going to have a health check'
- Explain to your child that this helps to keep them healthy
- Let your child examine the toy otoscope, stethoscope etc
- Show them how it is used on the doll/teddy bear
- Let them use it on you if they'd like
- Once they are comfortable have a go 'examining them'
- Give them lots of praise and maybe a small reward after each practice

Key things to remember:

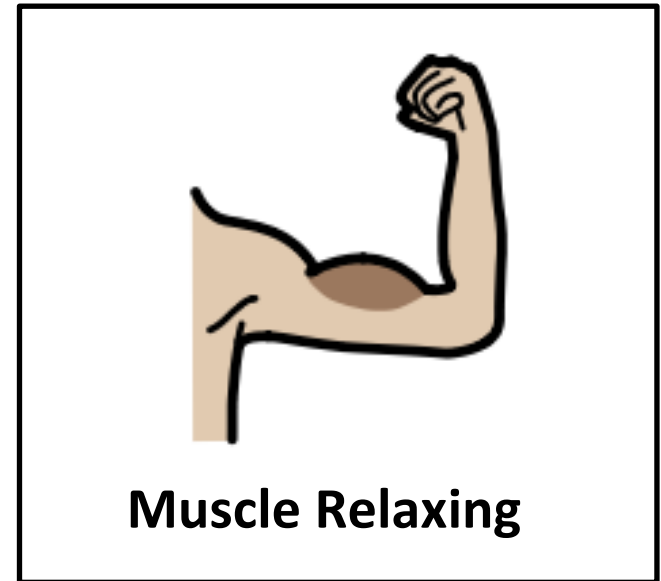
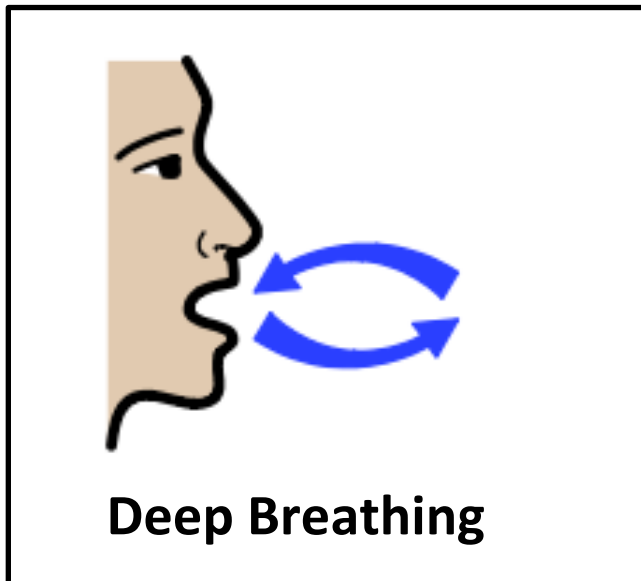
- ✓ Invite your child to watch or help but do not force them
- ✓ Choose a time where your child is relaxed
- ✓ Keep the mood light and playful
- ✓ Practice makes perfect! You can do this activity with your child a few times

On the day:

- ✓ Bring comfort items, your child's reward and communication tools with you
- ✓ Bring something for your child to do while you speak to the doctor e.g. toys or sticker books
- ✓ Take a sand timer or mobile phone countdown with you to help your child understand this activity will end. Speak to the GP first for an estimated time before starting timer
- ✓ Reread your child the social story just before the appointment
- ✓ Use a visual timetable
- ✓ Tell the medical staff how to best get your child to comply – Give them your child's hospital passport
- ✓ **Stay calm yourself**
- ✓ Give your child choices along the way, like which chair etc
- ✓ Tell your child he or she is doing a great job, and be specific e.g. sitting in the chair, staying still etc
- ✓ Give your child their reward as soon as possible and always follow through with the reward you promised.



Visual Supports for Relaxing



[Will be printed, cut out and laminated]

Visual Timetable / now and next for a GP appointment

- You can use a visual timetable with your child, or a now and next board, or both
- Resources for both are included in this pack
- Both help your child to understand the sequence of events in the day

Now and next

When using the now-and-next board use blue tac to stick on two of the cards in the pack.

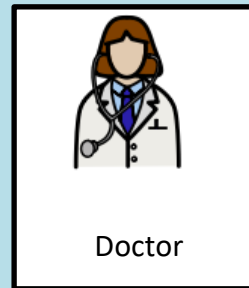
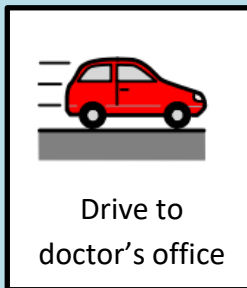
Show the board to your child and say 'Now is time for X, Next is Y'.

Visual Timetable

When it is time for an activity to occur, let your child know with a brief verbal instruction.

When that task is completed, check the schedule again with your child and transition to the next activity

[Will be printed cut out and laminated]



[Will be printed, cut out and laminated]

Now	Next



go



home



Doctor



sit



down

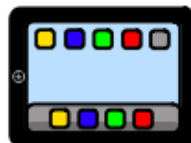


Special reward

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Stay still



Ipad

[Social story]