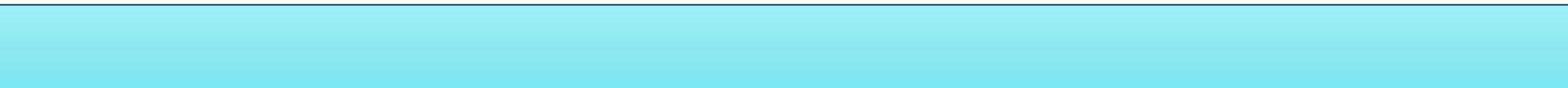




How to Get the Most out of Your Pediatrician's Visit

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Challenges with Doctor's Visits

- **Often due to sensory issues with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), doctor's visits can be very difficult**
 - Child is usually overstimulated
 - (bright lights, crowds, too noisy, sensitive to touch, etc.)
 - Child usually scared and non-compliant
 - Difficult to check ears and throat with children that have sensory issues
 - Many demands placed on kids in short time
 - Get weighed, measured, vital signs

Challenges with Doctor's Visits (con't)

- **Usually sick and well visit times are insufficient**
 - 10 – 15 minutes allotted for appointments are standard practices
 - Does not allow kids with ASD to gradually get used to the doctor and exam
- **Multiple demands placed on child**
 - Get on scale for weight
 - Get measured
 - Vital Signs (temperature, blood pressure)
 - Sensory challenges
 - kids with sensory sensitivity may resist getting ears and mouth/throat checked

Challenges with Doctor's Visits (con't)

- **Complex medical needs of kids ASD often cannot be addressed adequately with a standard visit**
- **With a child who has different sensory needs, the child will need more time for getting measured and examined**
- **Parents can often feel rushed and unable to develop a therapeutic relationship with their physician or other provider**

What's The Solution?

- No easy solution, but can streamline the visit with a provider who is willing to work with you.
- Step 1: Find the right provider that is used to working with special needs children
- Step 2: Prepare your child for appointment
- Step 3: Prepare yourself for appointment (see next slides for tips)
- Step 4: Optimize visit scheduling
- Step 5: Break up appointments into smaller appointments

Step 1: Find the Right Provider

- Take time to find a provider who is right for your child
- Ask friends, ask family, even ask for recommendations at therapy or play groups, can ask other parents when sitting in a waiting room for therapies
- Is there a provider who is more patient and who sees a larger group of patients with Autism?
- Look for a provider who is willing to work with you on a long term plan for acclimating your child, over time, with the same consistent check-up routine

Step 2: Prepare your child for appointment

- **Suggestions**

- Buy a doctor's kit and practice checking the child at home
- Let the child check you
- Shows like Doc McStDouffin can be very helpful in modeling a check-up
- Checking temperature with an ear thermometer can often make it easier to examine the ears at a provider's office as child gets used to something in their ears
- Sensory desensitization can happen with repeated use and children often get used to having their ears checked

Step 2: Prepare your child for appt. (con't)

• **Suggestions**

- Visual Checklist for child to see or pretend before going to appt:
 - Make a visual schedule for your child and show them each part of the appt.
 - Practice with visual schedule at home
 - Practice sitting in makeshift waiting room
 - Practice checking temperature and weight
 - Parent can pretend to be the doctor
 - Child can pretend to be the doctor and check you as the patient

Step 3: Prepare yourself

- **Make a list of problems you foresee with the visit for the provider or write a note**
 - **Give them the list/note before the appointment so they have a Heads-up about what they will have trouble with**
 - **Either give at the beginning of apt, or give to the staff member to give to the doctor before they walk through the door**
 - **Keep it brief**
 - **Can have the list put in the chart or added to the electronic chart so every one in the provider network can see the note (Example: note placed in chart in EPIC)**
 - **If you end up seeing a different provider, it ensures everyone has seen the one page summary you want them to see about your child**

Step 3: Prepare yourself: notes

● Examples:

- **My child has ASD, has sensory problems and looking at ears will be challenging. He really likes trucks and I have a truck in my bag that we can use as a motivation for letting you check his ears.**
- **My child will not look at you due to ASD, but they are listening to everything. I promised them a lollipop after the visit and it's in my bag and I can pull it out when you're having difficulty with the exam. Let me know when you need me to jump in so I can help you with holding him for the exam.**
- **I can't hold my child down for the ear check, please call for some extra staff members to hold him when they are not letting you check them.**

Step 4: Optimizing visit scheduling

- **Scheduling well visits:**

- **First appointment of the day or first appointment after lunch are usually the best (often most on-time)**
 - Provider not running behind due to other visits
 - Ensures less wait for your child in the waiting room
 - No crowds in waiting room so less stimulating environment
- **Can ask if possible to have extra time added to appt.**
 - Instead of a 10 – 15 minute well visit, ask if they can be longer due to child's complex healthcare needs
 - Ask an office manager or your provider beforehand when you schedule the appt.
 - If the provider can't do this, they can tell you and perhaps offer other solutions

Step 4: Optimizing visit scheduling

- **Scheduling sick visits:**

- **Ask if you can come early to be prepared**
- **Example: I foresee my child will have a difficult time being measured so I don't want to make you run behind, can I come 10 minutes early so we have enough time to get prepped for the apt?**
 - **This may not always happen but if you call ahead, have notes put on the chart, often people are very appreciative of you trying to come early**
- **Find a person at the office to connect with**
 - **Often this person can become your personal trouble-shooter, they can informally help as an advocate for you**

Step 5: Break Up Appointments

- **It may not be possible to cover everything you need covered in one appointment**
- **Realize that providers are often working with unrealistic templates (example: 10 – 15 minutes for all kids)**
 - Templates don't take into account if child has special health care needs unless you've already arranged this (see step 4)
- **You can address this in several ways:**
 - “I know that I won't be able to address all my concerns during this visit, can I come in for an additional sick visit this week to address the rest of my concerns?”
 - Many providers will recommend you come back as they can't address more than 1-2 big concerns at one visit
 - If you're willing to come back for another 1-2 appts, you ensure your child gets used to the office more
 - You will get to know your provider better and they will be appreciative of having more time to address the concerns in a way that does not put them 30 minutes behind schedule

Remember to advocate

- **You are your child's best advocate!**
- **You are trying to develop a long term therapeutic relationship with the doctor and the office**
- **The more you plan ahead and the clearer your communication with the office regarding expectations, the better the relationship**
- **If you find that despite your best efforts, you are not being successful, consider switching to another physician practice**