

Sensory-Friendly Healthcare Checklist for Providers

Creating a More Accessible and Comfortable Practice for Autistic Patients

Autistic individuals often experience heightened sensory sensitivities, making healthcare visits overwhelming. Simple adjustments can create a more supportive and accessible environment. Use this checklist to enhance sensory-friendly care in your practice.



Before the Appointment: Prepare for Sensory Needs

- ☐ **Offer Pre-Visit Communication**
 - Allow patients to request accommodations in advance via intake forms, email, or online portal.
- ☐ **Provide Clear Instructions**
 - Send a step-by-step guide explaining what to expect.
- ☐ **Allow Alternative Communication**
 - Offer email or text reminders instead of phone calls.
- ☐ **Schedule with Sensory Considerations**
 - Offer quieter appointment times, such as early morning slots.
- ☐ **Allow Extra Time**
 - If possible, provide longer appointments to reduce the stress and rushing.



In the Waiting Area: Reduce Sensory Overload

- ☐ **Adjust Lighting**
 - Use soft natural lighting and minimize fluorescent lights.
- ☐ **Reduce Noise**
 - Keep music, televisions, and announcements at a low volume.
- ☐ **Offer a Sensory-Friendly Space**
 - Provide a quiet waiting area or low-stimulation room.
- ☐ **Make Sensory Supports Available**
 - Offer noise-canceling headphones, fidget tools, weighted lap pads, and sunglasses.



During the Appointment: Foster Comfort & Communication

- ☐ **Respect Personal Space**
 - Always ask before touching and explain each step before proceeding.
- ☐ **Use Clear, Direct Language**
 - Avoid medical jargon and offer visual aids or written summaries.
- ☐ **Allow Stimming**
 - Recognize that self-regulatory movements like rocking and fidgeting are not disruptive behavior.
- ☐ **Support Alternative Communication**
 - Provide AAC devices, written communication, or gesture-based options.
- ☐ **Offer Sensory Breaks**
 - Allow time to regroup if a patient becomes overwhelmed.
- ☐ **Modify Exam Approaches**
 - Dim lights during eye exams if needed.
 - Offer manual blood pressure cuffs instead of automatic ones.
 - Provide an alternative to exam table paper, such as a towel or blanket.
 - Offer weighted blankets or compression vests for comfort when appropriate.



After the Appointment: Support Follow-Up Care

- ☐ **Provide a Written Visit Summary**
 - Include key takeaways, next steps, and clear instructions.
- ☐ **Offer Alternative Follow-Up Options**
 - Allow communication via email or patient portal instead of phone calls.
- ☐ **Request Feedback**
 - Create an accessible way for Autistic patients to share their experiences and suggest improvements.

By making small but meaningful adjustments, healthcare providers can ensure their practice is welcoming, accessible, and inclusive for Autistic patients.

A more sensory-friendly environment leads to better patient experiences and improved healthcare outcomes.