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Summer holidays: resources for families and carers

The summer holiday can be a difficult time for families with autistic children. Whether the family goes away for some of the summer or stays at home, the change in routine can be a challenge. For those going away, everything from travelling to a holiday destination to using public transport and getting used to a new place and routine can prove difficult and create a great deal of anxiety. There can also be a number of sensory challenges with the change of weather, different smells, different noises, applying sun cream, wearing different clothes, all of which can be stressful.

For some, the summer may also be a time of transition: from primary to secondary school, school to college, university or to the adult world, and families may need support to manage this.

Here we have gathered some articles offering advice on managing these issues which can be downloaded to give to parents. The links are clickable and we have written out the url so that the information can be printed.

Preparing an autistic person for change

This guide from the NAS gives advice on managing change and includes a section on going on holiday.

- Change: preparing for change (NAS)
(<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/preparing-for-change.aspx>)

Preparing for the holiday, going on holiday and days-out

Author: Nathalie Dick

Organisation: Network Autism team, the National Autistic Society

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The key is getting prepared as much as possible. From planning a day out or longer holiday, whether in the UK or abroad. Use the links below for guides from the NAS, Scottish Autism and Ambitious about Autism:

- Holidays: preparation and practicalities (NAS) (www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/out-and-about/holidays-and-days-out/holidays-preparation-and-practicalities.aspx)
- Holidays and days out (NAS) (www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/out-and-about/holidays-and-days-out.aspx)
- Going on holiday (Scottish Autism) (<http://www.scottishautism.org/services-support/support-families/information-resources/going-holiday>)
- Going on holiday (Ambitious about Autism) (www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/understanding-autism/out-and-about/going-on-holiday)
- Tips for an autism-friendly summer (Ambitious about Autism) (<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/understanding-autism/tips-for-an-autism-friendly-summer-2015>)
- Expedia Canada has put together some advice for families going on holiday: (<https://www.expedia.ca/travelblog/autism-travel-guide>)

Some museums have made adjustments for autistic visitors. Tincture of Museum is a blog with specific sections on autism and has now launched the Autism in Museums website:

- Autism in museums (<https://essexmdo.com/2017/03/24/autism-and-museums>)
- Autism in museums website: (<http://autisminmuseums.com/>)

The National Autistic Society has produced an autism guide for tourism in partnership with Visit England (LINK) and England's Inclusive Tourism Action Group. The guide offers advice to tourist venues and other services to improve autistic people's experience by making small changes which can make a big difference to them. The guide includes information on:

- how they can help autistic people before they visit and suggestions on what to include in accessibility guides and how to create visual stories.
- how to make their venue accessible by assessing it for sensory sensitivity and creating low arousal environments
- tips for interacting with autistic people
- how achieve the Autism Friendly Award.

Using visual supports

Visual supports can be extremely useful to help prepare the autistic person for change. The NAS has downloadable information:

- Visual supports (NAS) (<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/visual-supports.aspx>)

Sensory issues in the summer

Many autistic people can encounter sensory difficulties in the summer, such as problems with applying sun cream, insects or bright sunlight. Dr Olga Bogdashina, author, practitioner and lecturer gives her Top 5 Tips for managing sensory difficulties.

- Top 5 tips for autism professionals: Dr Olga Bogdashina on sensory difficulties (Network Autism) (<http://network.autism.org.uk/knowledge/insight-opinion/top-5-tips-autism-professionals-dr-olga-bogdashina-sensory-difficulties>)

Transition

The holiday can also be a period of transition from primary to secondary, from school to adulthood, from school to college or university. Below are some articles that may help making use of the summer to prepare for these:

- Pre-school to primary transitions for autistic children (Network Autism) (<http://network.autism.org.uk/good-practice/case-studies/pre-school-primary-transitions-children-autism>)
- Transition (NAS) (<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/transition>)
- Transition from secondary school to adulthood (Network Autism) (<http://network.autism.org.uk/knowledge/insight-opinion/transition-secondary-school-adulthood>)
- Transitions for young people on the autism spectrum (Network Autism) (<http://network.autism.org.uk/knowledge/insight-opinion/transitions-young-people-autism-spectrum>)

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- Supporting autistic people to transition into university life (Network Autism) (<http://network.autism.org.uk/good-practice/case-studies/supporting-people-autism-transition-university-life>)
- Autism: planning for transition into community living (network Autism) (<http://network.autism.org.uk/knowledge/insight-opinion/autism-planning-transition-community-living>)
- Transition Toolkit: (Autism Education Trust) (<http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/transition%20toolkit.aspx>)

Travelling

Many airports now offer support to autistic travellers. Below is some specific information:

- The Good Schools Guide offers advice for families flying with children with special needs: (<https://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk/special-educational-needs/family/flying-with-children-with-special-needs>)
- Airport awareness in Scotland (NAS) (<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/holidays-trips/preparation/airports-scotland.aspx>)
- Gatwick: Our autism-friendly visual guide to travelling through Gatwick Airport (<http://gatwickairport.com/globalassets/documents/passengers/prm/autismguidetogatwick.pdf>)
- Heathrow: does not have autism specific advice, but offers assistance. Facilities for those who need special assistance (<http://www.heathrow-airport-guide.co.uk/disabled-facilities.html>)
- Belfast: offers help for families travelling with autistic children - autism awareness (<http://www.belfastairport.com/special-assistance/autism-awareness>)
- Cardiff: has autism champions to help autistic passengers. (<https://www.cardiff-airport.com/special-assistance/>)
- Edinburgh: Autism-spectrum disorders (<http://www.edinburghairport.com/prepare/travelling-with-additional-needs>)
- Manchester: Manchester airport autism awareness booklets and accompanying video can be downloaded from the Childcare and Family Information Directory: (<https://stockport.fsd.org.uk/kb5/stockport/fsd/service.page?id=U7gQ5anVdZ0>)

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- Liverpool: Autism awareness at Liverpool John Lennon Airport (<https://www.liverpoolairport.com/help-advice/autism-awareness/>)
- Newcastle: Passengers with autism (<http://www.newcastleairport.com/passengers-restricted-mobility#Autism>)

Personal stories

Transitions during the holidays – a parent’s perspective:

(<http://www.autismnetworkscotland.org.uk/transitions-during-the-holidays-a-parents-perspective>)

“We’re all going on a (autistic) summer holiday...” (blog)

(<http://aspertypical.com/2014/05/16/were-all-going-on-a-autistic-summer-holiday>)

Where to go

Autism London have produced a factsheet listing holiday centres and schemes across the UK and abroad which welcome families with an autistic member

(http://www.autismlondon.org.uk/pdf-files/factsheets/020_Holiday_Centres.pdf)

Bristol Autism Support has put together a list of holiday resources and providers for families with autistic children:

(<http://www.bristolautismsupport.com/holidays-families-autistic-children>)

Help and advice for parents

The **National Autistic Society** (<http://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines.aspx>) provides impartial, confidential information and advice for autistic people, their families and carers.