



Preparing your practice for autistic patients

1. Improve and develop your understanding of autism

Relevant staff: All

- Autistic patients can be hypersensitive to lights and touch. Consider alternative tests that don't require a bright light or touch contact. If sensory experiences can't be avoided, minimise them and give the patient advance warning of them.
- Autistic patients can be anxious or stressed about their appointment. Think about how you could make them feel calm and comfortable. This can be achieved by staff introducing themselves, explaining and not rushing procedures, and not overwhelming the patient with lots of choices.
- Do autism awareness training for a basic understanding of the condition.
- Have an autism champion in practice who has an advanced understanding of autism. They can be the contact for autistic patients and can advise staff on what considerations and adaptations to make. They could set up autism awareness training for staff.

2. Think about adaptations that you could make to your practice operation

Relevant staff: All

- Identify quieter times of day in the practice. Offer appointments at these times to autistic patients who are hypersensitive to sound or lots of movement, or feel anxious around lots of people.
- If extra time is required, consider spreading the examination across two visits.
- If the autistic patient is hypersensitive to the lighting in the practice main entrance, consider allowing them to come in through another entrance.
- Is there a quiet area in the practice where autistic patients could wait instead of a busy waiting area? Could they go straight into the testing room?

3. Aim for practitioner continuity across visits

Relevant staff: Optometrists, dispensing opticians



- Try to have autistic patients managed by the same optometrist and dispensing staff at each visit. It may not be possible to have consistency of every staff member, but a familiar face can make an autistic person feel less anxious.

The contents of this resource were developed as part of a PhD project titled 'Investigating optometric and orthoptic conditions in autistic adults' at The University of Manchester. For more information, contact Ketan Parmar: ketan.parmar@manchester.ac.uk

Visit the Autism and Vision website: <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/autism-and-vision/>