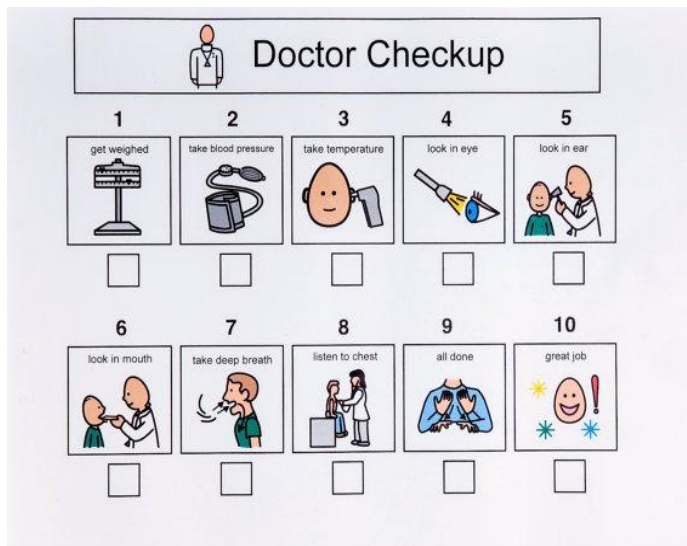




Preparing for medical appointments?

Together, we can work to make medical appointments a less stressful experience for those with profound autism and intellectual disabilities.



Most of us receive a text message from our doctors notifying us that a medical check up or a dental appointment is due. We then go about setting the appointment, prepare our schedule to accommodate the appointment and ask questions on what to expect. In the same vein, we must prepare individuals with profound

autism and intellectual disabilities for their medical appointments.

Ensuring timely medical care access is crucial. This necessitates some proactive measures and attention to guarantee that the individual gets appropriate care and support. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Make a written list of current symptoms**, when they started, and any factors that might worsen or improve them.
2. **Prepare a list of all current medications**, dosages, and the times they're taken.
3. **Ask the medical practitioner what can the individual expect** from the appointment including information on the wait times, entertainment available in the waiting room (e.g. TV, colouring pages, magazines etc.) and if drinks and snacks are available and allowed while waiting.



4. **Provide information about the individual's ability** to communicate, mobility, cognitive function, and behavioural tendencies. Include information on how the individual refuses or dissents and accepts or assents treatment.



5. **Provide information to the individual** about what can be expected during the medical appointment by using checklists, timers and visual schedules etc. Use simulated materials for role play where necessary.

6. Mention any **adaptive equipment or communication devices** they use.

7. **Alert the medical staff** about any sensory sensitivities the individual may experience, such as sensitivities to light, sound, smell or touch..

8. **Bring items that can comfort or entertain** the individual.

9. If you anticipate needing extra appointment time or have special requests, **notify the doctor's office in advance**. Aim to **schedule the appointment during the individual's optimal time** of day, avoiding times when they are typically fatigued or agitated. **Dedicate time to comfort and reassure** the individual, especially if the appointment was challenging for them.

10. **Employ the techniques suggested by a BCBA** to calm or redirect them effectively

The goal is to **create a supportive environment** that makes the medical visit as smooth and stress-free as possible for both the individual and the healthcare providers. Accessing medical care should not be aversive to anybody and **effective communication and preparation are key**.

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