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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.

The Autism Services Directory

This online directory from the National Autistic Society (NAS) allows you to search for play schemes, autism friendly holidays, events such as autism friendly screenings, and local services. It can be searched by category, local area, age group and more.

The Autism Services Directory: www.autism.org.uk/directory.

For a guide to searching the directory: www.autism.org.uk/directory/help.aspx

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Preparing a person with autism for change

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

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

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

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>)

Some museums have made adjustments for autistic visitors. Tincture of Museum is a blog with specific sections on autism:

- Autism in museums (<https://tinctureofmuseum.wordpress.com/autism-in-museums-events/>)

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-schol to primary transitions for children with autism (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>)
- Supporting people with autism 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) (www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/transition%20toolkit.aspx)

Travelling

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

- 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 (<http://www.manchesterairport.co.uk/about-us/media-centre/airport-awareness>)
- 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

Autistic Mother: Summer holidays: <http://www.autismwomenmatter.org.uk/portfolio/autistic-mother-summer-holidays>)

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“We’re all going on a (autistic) summer holiday...” (blog)
(<http://aspertypical.com/2014/05/16/were-all-going-on-a-autistic-summer-holiday>)

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.