



Humber Sensory Processing Service



Appointments and medication

Visiting the doctors, dentists or opticians can be a daunting task for children with sensory processing differences. However, adding predictability to tasks and communicating in advance with clinicians can make these visits easier to navigate. Here you will find some tips on how to make medical visits or taking medication less tricky.

Medical appointments

- Help your child to regulate by engaging them in heavy muscle push and pull activities *before* going to any appointments.
- Speak with the doctors surgery, dentist, or opticians before you book an appointment and explain your child's sensory differences. They may be able to offer you an appointment at a quieter time. They may be able call you to come in for your appointment, so that you are able to avoid sitting in the waiting room.
- A double appointment may also be helpful, as it will give you and your child more time.
- Medical appointments can often involve touch as part of an examination. Explain to the clinician about using firm, deep pressure touch rather than light touch. Ask if they can tell your child when they need to touch them or what they plan to do next to make it more predictable for your child.
- If your child likes to use a weighted blanket, this may be useful to take to a dentist appointment.
- Try to add predictability to medical appointments by helping your child understand what to expect. It may be useful to use YouTube to show them videos of what happens during their appointments or engage them in pretend medical play with teddies or dolls.
- Some children need to know in advance that they have an appointment to help them to prepare. Using a visual timetable can be



a good way to show them the date and time of the appointment; placing it somewhere prominent, like on the fridge may be helpful.

- Use 'now and next' to make the medical appointment more close-ended for your child, so they will know that the activity will end. For example, 'now we are going to the doctors and next we are going to the park'.
- Doctors and dentists tend to be brightly lit, which can be overwhelming. Trial using sunglasses for appointments.
- Listening to music whilst visiting the dentist may also make it more relaxing.

Medication

- Approach medicine in the same way as trying a new food. Your child will need to get used to how the medicine looks before they start to interact, touch, smells and taste it.
- The Sensory Approach to Eating (available in the resources section of the website) can help with other ways to approach trying new medicines.
- Trial engaging in supervised medical play to help your child become familiar with medicines e.g., play with empty medicine bottles and plastic syringes. This can be with water or other liquids. Practice using these on teddies and with each other.
- Use suck and blow activities (breathing activities) to help your child regulate prior to taking medicine. Try activities such as drinking from a sports bottle or straw, blowing cotton wool or a paper ball football or drinking a thick drink through a straw.
- Take any medication with water, or with other food or drinks (depending on the medication).



- Encourage your child to lean forward slightly when taking medicine to make it easier to swallow.
- Deep pressure touch, such as a massage, or being wrapped in a weighted blanket, may make taking medication easier.



For more advice and strategies like this, you can visit our website:
sensoryprocessinghub.humber.nhs.uk

Or you can contact us with a question on the email address below:
hnf-tr.humbersensoryprocessingservice@nhs.net

