

Let's go to the doctor!

Going to the doctor is an essential part of our lives. Sometimes it can also be a stressful time for families. If you have concerns about going to the doctor with your child, here are some ideas we hope will help.



Before the appointment

If you are concerned about **physical access and amenities**, call beforehand and talk to the Doctor's office about your access needs. You may also choose to contact the **doctor's office** first to discuss any concerns or challenges that may arise during the appointment and discuss a plan to address these.

Talking with others about your child's disability can sometimes be difficult - what you choose to share with others is entirely up to you. The information you do choose to share may help others develop good relationships with your child and better understand how they can help your child in different environments.

You can prepare your child by:

- ❖ Reading stories or watching videos about going to the doctor
- ❖ Playing and practicing what happens when you go to the doctor
- ❖ Using visual supports (photos of the doctor, of the doctor's office, a schedule of what is going to happen)
- ❖ Developing a social story for your child about going to the doctor
- ❖ Visiting with your before the appointment - so your child is more familiar with the environment
- ❖ Letting your child watch someone else first - if you or another family member will be having a doctors appointment, bring your child so they can see what happens.

By understanding **what will happen** and **what is expected** of them, your child will feel less anxious or confused.

Be prepared with supports for your child's **sensory needs** – you may wish to work with your early intervention specialist to develop a sensory profile for your child.

Consider **calling ahead** to see if the doctor is running on time. If they are delayed and your child may be anxious in the waiting area, you may choose to wait in your car and request that you be called when the doctor is ready.

Plan to keep your child **engaged and interested** while you're at the doctor. Take a drink or snack, your child's favourite toy or a have reward to keep your child motivated. You may find it helpful to have a family member or friend come along to help.

Plan for **challenging situations** by thinking about:

- ❖ What are the signs your child is becoming upset?
- ❖ What can help prevent the situation from escalating?
- ❖ Is there somewhere quiet you can go to take a break?

During the appointment

Use **visuals** to help your child understand what will be happening next. **Praise** your child, **encourage** positive behaviours or have a reward to motivate your child.

If your child does become distressed, **stay calm** yourself so you can support your child. If necessary and if you are able, finish the appointment before the situation becomes too overwhelming. It is best if you have small successes first.

**While being prepared will give you the best chance to succeed, things don't always go to plan.
Reflect on what worked and what didn't to help you plan for your next appointment.**

If you would like more information about community inclusion, we have developed a series of factsheets and checklists for families and communities.

These can be found at:

<http://www.directory.byronearlyintervention.org.au/>



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