



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Community Safety

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism” is a series of practical video’s and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

Children with autism often don’t understand safety they don’t understand the fear of danger. Most people know what a fireman, what a police officer, what an E.M.T is supposed to do and how to go to them for help children with autism don’t often have those natural skill and have to learn them and be taught by their caregiver or parent. Children with autism have a tendency to wander they have a tendency run out to the street without anyone even noticing we really have to be on high alert, not only the caregivers, but the people in the community to make sure children with autism are safe.

One common danger is that children with autism are often attracted to water. This can be a very dangerous situation especially if they don’t know how to swim. We recommend that recreation providers in the community help children with special needs, particularly autism have learned safety skills in and around water especially learning how to swim because of this attraction and their lack of fear and danger.

Sometimes when children with autism are challenged by their environment or have sensory issues they may have what’s called sensory overload and be challenged to run out of a room really quickly or run from a very safe environment potentially to an area that might be at risk. It’s important for children, particularly children with autism, who are nonverbal to carry some kind of identification with them, it could be a card it could be a sheet of paper, they should keep it in their backpack or in their pocket or they could wear it on a piece of clothing, but just as long as they have it with them at all times.

It’s a really important tip to realize that you shouldn’t have the children keep them in a pocket, but have something on the outside so that nothing is misrepresented by a police officer by going into a pocket or by going into a piece of clothing. So having it on the outside will enable a person with autism to just be able to pull it out and show the form of identification. Social stories are a great way to teach children what to do in an emergency they can tell them what to expect and what the rules and what to do in case a bad situation happens.

These kind of resources are available online, you could create them yourself or you could seek professional help to get assistance with making one particular for your child’s needs. For children who are verbal you might want to ask them to answer some very basic questions like for instance, “what is your name? Where do you live?” and perhaps you know being able to identify at least some parts of their body in case they get injured. I recommend for

families to go out and get to know their police, fire and rescue in their community get to know as best you can so that the children are familiar not only with the uniform, but with how to interact and what to expect from them. Sometimes even role playing is a great way to kind of help the kids understand what to do in a situation so they can see and act it out in case the emergency happens.

Another idea is to potentially do some video modelling which is showing children on video what to do and how to act in an emergency situation. Calling the emergency dispatch would help them understand in case of an emergency if your child was to run into a particular place they would know that ahead of time and be able to look that place first before looking elsewhere. Very often we don't know what our child might do in an emergency. They may act unpredictable they may run to a place that we may not know kind of their safe place.

It's important to help identify what that place is so that if there is an emergency we know where to look first. Many towns, counties, or states have something called a special needs registry where a family could register their child with specific disabilities autism other and let them know what challenges they may have in case of an emergency. There are tracking mechanisms that are available for children to wear as bracelets or ankle bracelets and it's a gps system in essence for a person. What happens is if a child gets out of a house or a familiar environment, a telephone call can be made to the police department and search and rescue will track that person's signal and typically find the child within twenty minutes. I recommend that families advocate with your schools to include some safety skill within their I.E.P's it's really important to not only learn those skills at school but in a general environment at home or in the community so that those safety skills can take place anywhere if they need to.

It's important to tell neighbors and emergency responders about some of the challenges and the safety issues that your children may have because more people are there to observe your child and protect them and the better you are and the better and safer that child is going to be. People at children's specialized hospital and other professionals can go out in the community and train first responders and families about safety issues. Please go out and search that kind of information and ask for some help. The safety of your child is most important."

For more real life tips on children with autism spectrum disorder visit www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



www.childrens-specialized.org