



## VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

### Traveling and Vacations

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 videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

As exciting as vacations can be, they can be very stressful as well for families. Anything out of the ordinary can be a challenge for kids with autism.

It’s important to try to have things that are familiar to the child and preferred objects, so I would recommend bringing a child’s favorite toy or book or something related to their favorite character to help them feel comfortable. For example, if they’re on an airplane and they’ve never been on an airplane before but if they have a favorite blanket or their favorite Dora toy it can help make them feel much more comfortable. Having toys and snacks and new objects also helps when unexpected events happen, so it’s a good idea to try not to speak in finite terms. So for example, rather than saying, if you were at any amusement park for example, rather than saying “After lunch we are definitely going to go on that roller coaster that everybody wants to go on” it might be a good idea to say “We’ll try to go on the roller coaster, but if we can’t, then we’ll do something else that’s fun like go on the Ferris wheel.” We can never prepare for when the roller coaster might be closed, when it might start raining or when obstacles get in the way, so it’s always a good idea to not get kid’s hopes up and to let them know that if something doesn’t work out there’s a backup plan.

It’s always recommended to think about revealing what’s going on with your child to people who can be helpful to you; to security personnel, to TSA agents, to hotel agents, anyone who might be able to make your travel go a little more smoothly. There might be opportunities for private lines or for quiet waiting areas so that kids with autism don’t get so overwhelmed and that parents can feel that they can take their time in going through security or checking in at the hotel or waiting on line at an amusement park. Sometimes parents are uncomfortable or even embarrassed asking for help for their child with autism.

Most people can be really sensitive and can be really, really helpful but don’t always know what to do, so we found that when parents are open about what their child’s needs are, other people are more than happy to provide assistance, especially people in the hospitality and travel industry. They want to make this a comfortable experience for everyone but they might not know how to do that, so they really rely on parents to let them know what their child needs to make it a comfortable experience and most parents will find that once they’ve shared that information they feel much more comfortable.

Sometimes parents are concerned about how other travelers may perceive their child's behavior. We recommend if someone seems to be having some difficulty with your child's behavior, you may want to speak to that person and share what's going on and most people will try to be accommodating when they are aware that you are doing the best you can as a parent and you have the right to be there as well as much as anyone else.

Many children have difficulty transitioning from one activity to the next, especially if they are really enjoying an activity and what's next on the agenda might be less preferable. This is where parents can really help the transition by bringing toys or other objects or preferred snacks or having something in their back pocket so that the child can transition smoothly from one enjoyable task or activity to the next task or enjoyable activity so especially on vacation we might indulge our kids a little bit more because we want that to be a smooth process.

Some children with autism can benefit from having technology or pictures available to them ahead of time. They could have a map or a picture of the airport or the hotel or the place that they are travelling to so that they can really see what it's going to look like. Sometimes they can even travel ahead of time and prepare themselves to go on a plane or go on a train and practice what that experience will be like. With technology now we can go online and see so many different pictures and websites of places where we might travel, so kids can really enjoy getting excited about what their experience will be and that should help relieve some of their anxiety as well.

Vacations should be fun for everyone and families who have children with autism are no exception. There are lots of resources available to provide suggestions and strategies to help prepare for your trip and many businesses in the travel industry are also willing to provide accommodations to help your family have the best experience possible.



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



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