

In the Heart of Autism

A desensitization program aiming to alleviate anxiety anticipated over medical examinations of persons diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder





Purpose and objectives of a desensitization program aiming to alleviate anxiety anticipated over medical examinations of persons diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Cardiac or other medical examinations or a visit to a hospital is often a casual experience for most of us. Nevertheless, for some people it might be a rather stressful experience, especially for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their parents, who will be confronted with the stress and fear that may be induced by common procedures of a medical examination: from getting a referral, to receiving a cardiac ultrasound or a cardiogram. Certainly, you don't need to be diagnosed with autism to be afraid of medical examinations and hospital visits!

There are many people without autism who adamantly avoid or are afraid of medical examinations and hospital visits. Nevertheless, sensory complications and increased anxiety, that typically characterize a person with ASD, render an aversion to medical examinations and interventions highly probable.

Designed for adolescents and young adults with ASD, the cardiac testing simulation program's objective is to familiarize them with

the procedures related to cardiac tests and desensitize them to the hospital environment. To achieve this goal, a systematic therapeutic training program aiming to familiarize people with ASD with the medical examination procedures, prior to their visit to the hospital, ought to be followed, while the final step of this program includes the administration of an actual cardiac test to the person with ASD who should be accompanied by one of his/her parents or therapists/carers. "In the Heart of Autism" is an initiative of the **Onassis Foundation**, implemented in partnership with the **Onassis Cardiac Surgery Center** and the **Pan-Hellenic Association of Adapted Activities ALMA**, under the auspices of the **National and Kapodistrian University of Athens**, which aims to release the strengths of adolescents and young adults diagnosed with ASD, as well as to raise awareness of the general public.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is an umbrella diagnosis for individuals who can be very different from one another. Some may be highly intelligent but face social and emotional difficulties, while others may present behavioral problems, and deficits in communication, speech, and language, in adjusting to social conventions, in processing sensory information, in learning, and in managing anxiety. While it is possible to spot specific ASD characteristics in some people, immediately, this is not always the case. Even when they are not apparent to other people, these difficulties may significantly burden the person who experiences them. When difficulties escalate within an environment that is not supportive of persons with ASD, they may end up manifesting extreme reactions including **anger outbursts, and self-harm**.

The prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder seems to have risen at an **epidemic rate** in recent years, but we are as yet unsure of the causes of this increase.

It is estimated that the percentage of people diagnosed with ASD approaches 2% of the general population. According to recent research findings, 1 in 54 8-year-old children, in the USA, are currently diagnosed with ASD. With early and intensive behavioral interventions by appropriately trained specialists, a significant percentage of children with ASD may respond very well and live a completely normal life. Yet, the majority of children diagnosed with ASD will need either minor, moderate, or significant lifelong support. Possible reasons why a child with ASD does not improve are related to genetic factors and thus have a biological origin. Lack of adequate therapeutic and educational services also leads to a poor prognosis despite the potential a child with ASD may have.

Sensory Overload & Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

We perceive our environment through our senses, and we learn through it. Consequently, our perception affects our feelings, our behavior, as well as the way we communicate with others. Sensory processing refers to a person's ability to **experience, apprehend, and organize sensory stimuli** originating from their body and from their environment.

Many people with ASD experience sensory sensitivities and difficulties processing stimuli associated with **one or more of their senses** (e.g. hearing, touch, smell, vision, taste, balance, and proprioception). For example, a person with ASD might be **under-sensitive and/or over-sensitive** to stimuli, frequently switching between the two and thereby resulting in distress, anxiety, or even physical pain. These atypical kinds of reaction to sensory stimuli may lead to **antisocial behavior**, but also to a tendency, on the part of the person with ASD, to avoid exposure to a multitude of stimuli considered by most people

as pleasant, such as a walk in the park or a visit to a restaurant, that is activities accompanied by a multisensory experience (e.g. visual, olfactory, tactile, and other types of stimuli).

The hospital environment may be a particularly triggering, complex, and demanding setting for a person with ASD, as it includes a multitude of sensory stimuli (bright lights, crowded halls and rooms, loud announcements over the public address system, and medical equipment, among others).

Consequently, if people with ASD are not properly prepared for an environment loaded with sensory stimuli, they may experience **anxiety and insecurity**, since they will be in a state of constant alert, trying to escape sensory discomfort. It is therefore likely that they will feel anxiety, insecurity, and behavioral distress.

Anxiety and ASD

People diagnosed with ASD experience **intense anxiety**, which is usually caused by their difficulty to understand the expectations of their social environment, by their inability to communicate their needs, and to decode what is occurring at a social level and in their environment at large, as well as by their sensory sensitivities. For example, they experience intense anxiety when they are asked to participate in a social situation, when there is a change in their routine, and when they can't predict or control what will happen to them. The hospital's environment, getting a medical referral from the reception desk in an outpatient clinic, having to wait, the process of undergoing medical examinations, and meeting unfamiliar people from the nursing and medical staff, all constitute potential conditions that may trigger acute anxiety in people with ASD.

Anxiety is accompanied by **physical symptoms** (such as sweat, abdominal tightness, and tachycardia) which in turn lead to negative thinking (for instance, "Is the physical exam going to hurt?" or "I won't make it through the ultrasound"). People with ASD often do not communicate their anxiety in words, but tend to **express anxiety and their feelings, in general, through specific inappropriate behavior** (e.g. an anger outburst, repetitive movements, or by covering their ears to block noise). Therefore, it is important to be understanding of their difficulties and to help them adjust to the unpredictable circumstances within a hospital unit. In addition, it is important to provide them with training on best ways to manage anxiety which they inevitably experience.



What makes people with ASD struggle?

Complex terms/words; people who speak a lot and fast.

People who **shout** or argue.

Surprises, **unexpected** situations, changes in schedule.

Understanding the **thoughts** and **feelings** of others.

They understand what you say **literally**; they do not understand metaphorical expressions, similes, and/or humor.

Explaining in words what bothers them or what they need. Therefore, you may see them shouting or making repetitive movements.

Putting **pressure** on them for an immediate response (they may need more time to understand what you're asking).

Their senses function in a different way than yours; they cannot tolerate **commotion**, crowds of people, **noises**, and other intense stimuli.

They find body proximity, **being touched**, and the feel of certain textures difficult to tolerate.

What **helps** people with ASD?

Don't ask them to make eye contact when you talk to them; use **simple phrases** and straightforward words.

Speaking **quietly**.

When they know in advance **what is going to happen** or what they need to do.

When someone explains to them in a simple manner **what they are feeling**, what they like and don't like.

Use **simple and precise words** to describe exactly what you need from them; along with words, it really helps them to look at images/photos.

Show understanding, as **they cannot communicate** like you do.

Be **patient** with them.

A **quiet environment**; low lighting.

A **heads-up** on any imminent physical contact and a gradual exposure to the medical tools that will be used during the examination; be patient, as more time than usual might be needed to complete a medical examination.

What can I do during a medical examination, or a hospital visit to help a person with ASD?

If you can, **offer your seat** in the reception area of the outpatient unit or any other area of the hospital.

If they do something that might bother you, **refer kindly** to the hospital personnel or their carer. Avoid talking directly to them, as any remark might intensify the discomfort they already experience.

If you get tired of them talking about the things that interest them, you may **suggest** to them to change the subject of the conversation or tell them that you would like to be **alone** for a while.

If you see that they have a difficulty in expressing themselves, try to:

- Maintain your calm.
- **Avoid looking persistently** at them or their carer.
- **Avoid giving advice**, recommendations, and comments towards the persons with ASD and their carer.

If you want to help, **approach calmly** – preferably from the side of their carer – and ask discreetly **if they need your assistance**.



Do not take any action **without permission from their carer**.
If you don't know what to do or how to react, you may **refer to a hospital employee** to let you know what you can possibly do.

It is important to **be patient and supportive** in every way you can.

Their parents/carers are doing everything they can to help.
They didn't cause these difficulties. Try to be supportive and discreet.

Very often, an unusual behavior exhibited by a person with ASD is not an indication of what they want to do, but **what they can or cannot do.**

Methodology of Social Stories

What are Social Stories

Social Stories (SS) are brief stories that describe specific circumstances and narrate how one or more persons are involved in these stories. They include descriptions and narratives, given in a simple and descriptive manner, various possible outcomes for the development of the story, as well as the respective possible reactions of the heroes involved in the story. The stories are laid out step-by-step and come to simple conclusions. These narrations are usually accompanied by drawings or photographs, so as to enhance the understanding of the story and the message conveyed. The term **Social Stories is credited to Carol Gray (2015)**.

**Social Stories
are a tool and
not a set of rules.**

The Objective of Social Stories

The use of SS aims to improve the way people with ASD perceive the various social situations that they encounter, since the simple, descriptive manner in which these situations are portrayed helps them comprehend the messages exchanged during social interactions. In addition, using SS enables them to adjust their social responses according to social demands. In this way, it is expected that any dysfunctional social behavior occurring through the lack of understanding of social messages and signs will give way to socially acceptable behaviors, provided that the person with ASD is informed of the relevant dictates of their social environment. For example, through a social story, they may learn that they cannot speak up in class, unless they raise their hand and are given the teacher's permission to speak. Or, they should not hug strangers in the street, no matter how politely they might address them.

In summary, on the one hand, we expect an **improvement of the social behavior of the person accessing the social story** and, on the other hand, a reduction of any possible dysfunctional responses, such as increased anxiety or avoiding situations that are deemed challenging for someone with ASD.

Writing a Social Story

With regards to the writing and structure of a Social Story, the writer follows a **specific way of writing and/or illustrating** a story, in order to help a person comprehend a complex or difficult situation, through the presentation of relevant information in a **literal and clear** manner, often aided by the use of audiovisual material.

Carol Gray cites a set of helpful guidelines in the writing of SS. Regarding the drafting of a social story to enable someone become familiar with the procedure of a medical examination or a visit to the hospital, it is important to consider the following principles:

1. Start early

It is important to have time to **locate and process the information** needed for a medical examination procedure or a hospital visit, but also to prepare the person with ASD without hurry or anxiety.

2. Be informed

Before you start your preparation, try to **collect as much information as possible about the procedure** of the medical examination you are going to have or your hospital visit.

- General information regarding **social status** (who, where, when, how, what, why).
- **Characteristics of the person with ASD** that may affect the outcome of the social story (age, intellectual level, particular interests, typical behavior).

3. Shape the story

Upon collecting the information, it is necessary to **adjust the SS to the specific needs of the person**. When writing the story, we consider the following:

- A story is structured based on **4 types of basic sentences**: Descriptive Sentences, Perspective Sentences, Affirmative Sentences, and Coaching Sentences (Gray, 2012).

- Every Coaching Sentence must be complemented by 2–5 Descriptive Sentences and/or Perspective Sentences or Affirmative Sentences.

4. Read together

It is a good idea to read the SS in a **quiet space** and when the person with ASD is **calm and in a good mood**. **Observe their responses**, in order to correct or further explain anything that appears difficult to understand.

5. Repeat

The SS must be read in full **2–3 days** prior to the scheduled medical examination or hospital visit, to allow time for repetition. The SS must also be available to the person with ASD, so that **they can process it on their own**.

6. Make aware

It is important for all persons involved in a story to **know their role** and respond accordingly.

7. Remember

Keep the SS with you until the completion of the medical examination and your hospital visit.

Guidelines for parents/carers

The proper preparation of a person with ASD, before medical examinations are conducted or before a hospital visit, plays a decisive role in their successful completion.

In the next pages, 11 social stories will outline a comprehensive program for preparing adolescents and young adults with ASD for cardiac tests, starting with how to get prepared for medical examinations to how to receive results/ findings from the hospital.

Getting prepared for a hospital visit and medical examinations

Information for a Hospital visit (Introductory Story)





My name is and I am years old.



I will need to visit (name) Hospital,
in order to have some medical examinations.

All people have medical
examinations to take care
of their health!

.....
This is normal!

At the Hospital, I will have three cardiac tests:



Blood pressure test



Cardiogram

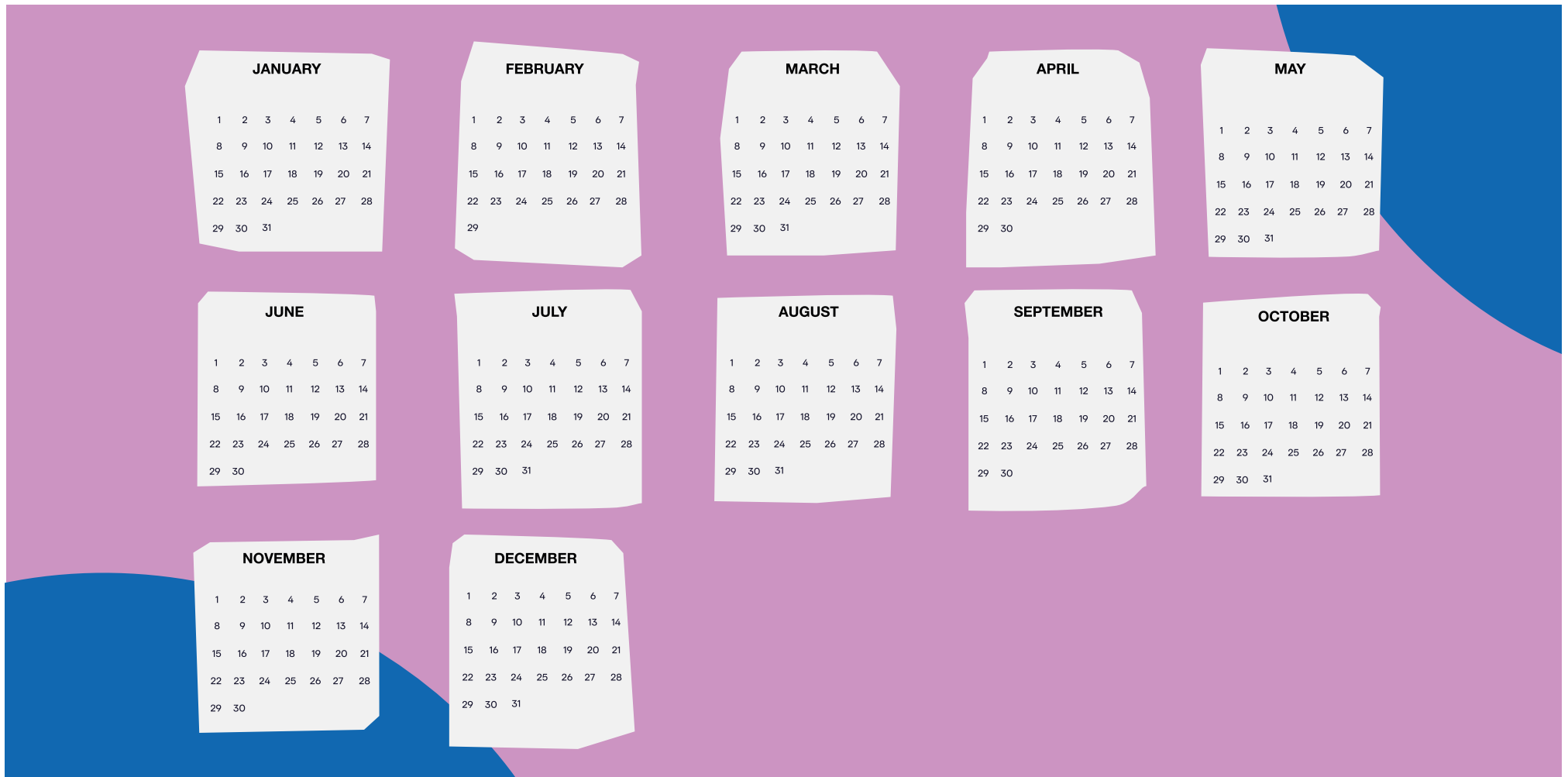


Heart ultrasound

At the Hospital, the doctor and the nurse will have to touch me.

This is normal!

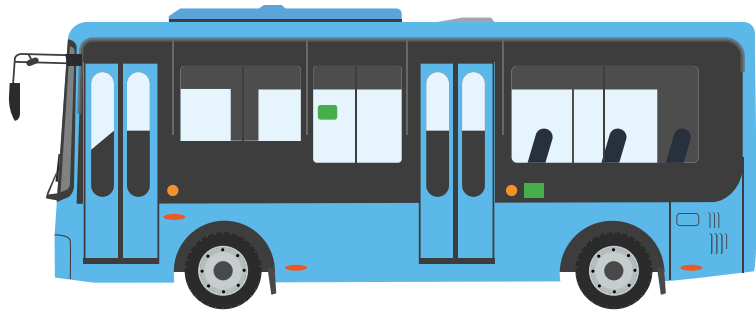
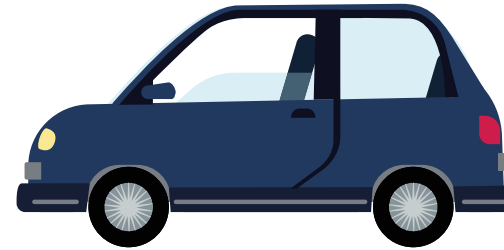




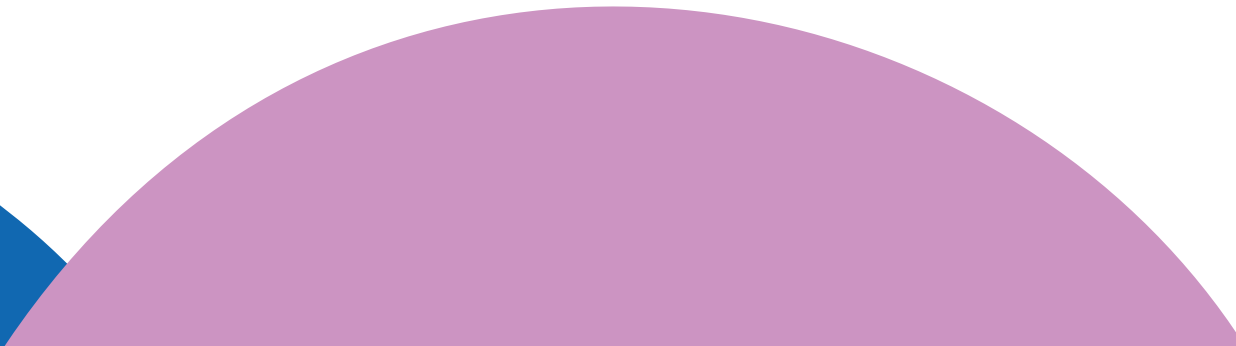
We have an appointment on (date)
with doctor (name of the doctor).



I will visit the Hospital with (name of carer).



We will get to the Hospital by (means of transport).





My parents are happy that we will visit the Hospital to have medical examinations.

Attention!

Regarding the preparation for medical examinations and a hospital visit, remember the following:

The familiarization of a person with *ASD* with a hospital visit and a cardiac or other medical test may be supplemented by the following:

- Books
- Video and/or photographs
- Games (e.g. video games, Playmobil, jigsaw)
- Role-playing





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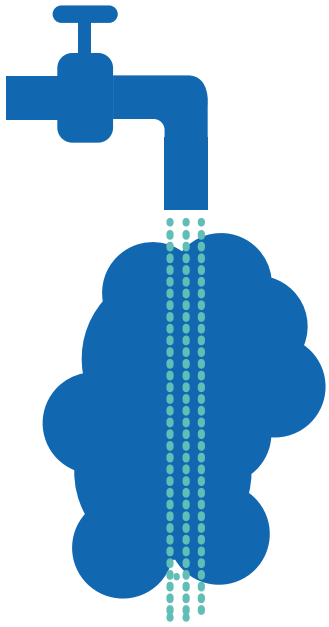
Getting prepared for the Hospital

I am getting ready to visit the Hospital to have medical examinations.

It is important to be well prepared before I visit the Hospital.
That way, everything will turn out fine!



On the day of my appointment for medical examinations:



I will have a shower



I will get dressed



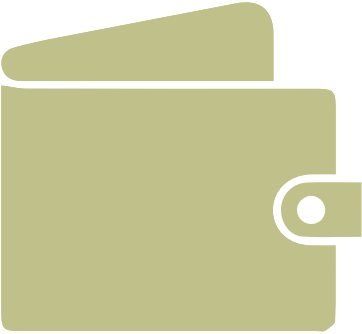
I will prepare my bag



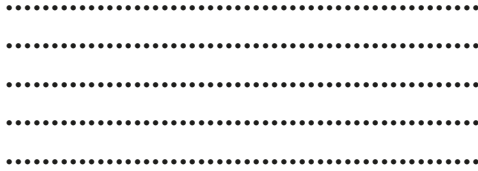
I will put in my bag:



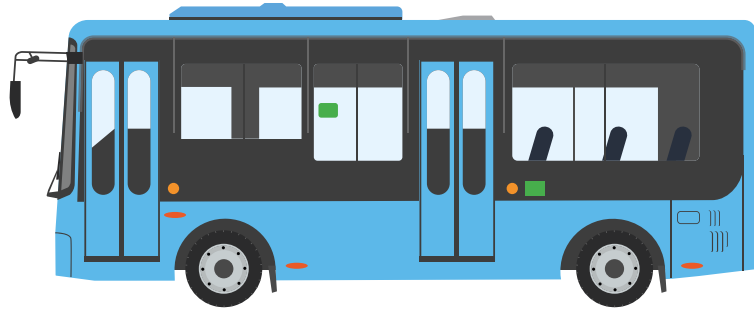
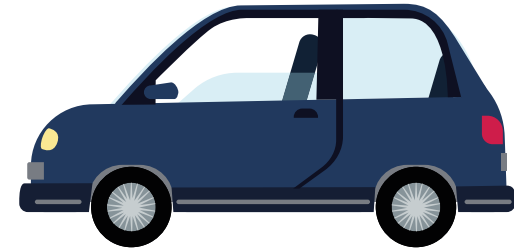
My health insurance card



My wallet



Favorite things



We will get to the Hospital by (means of transport).



I am ready to visit the Hospital!



Attention!

When preparing the bag of a person with ASD, make sure that you have:

- Their Health Insurance Card, where their Social Security Number is listed.
 - Their identity card, provided it is issued.
- Their wallet, with money or cards that the person with ASD has learned to use.
- A document, containing all the necessary information for the person with ASD (e.g. first and last name, date of birth, etc.), especially if the person with ASD faces significant difficulties in speech and communication.
 - Items used for the personal hygiene of the person with ASD, such as:
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Tissues
 - Material used to keep the person with ASD occupied while waiting, such as:
 - A Favorite book
 - A Tablet with preferred apps
 - A Snack and drinks

Also:

It would help to have previously contacted the hospital you will visit, in order to become informed of their operation guidelines, especially with regards to:

- Personal documents of the person with ASD that you will need to bring with you (such as, prior medical examinations, health insurance card).
- Hospital operation rules (e.g. in some hospitals, the use of mobile phones is not allowed during your stay at their premises).



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**On the way from
home to the Hospital**

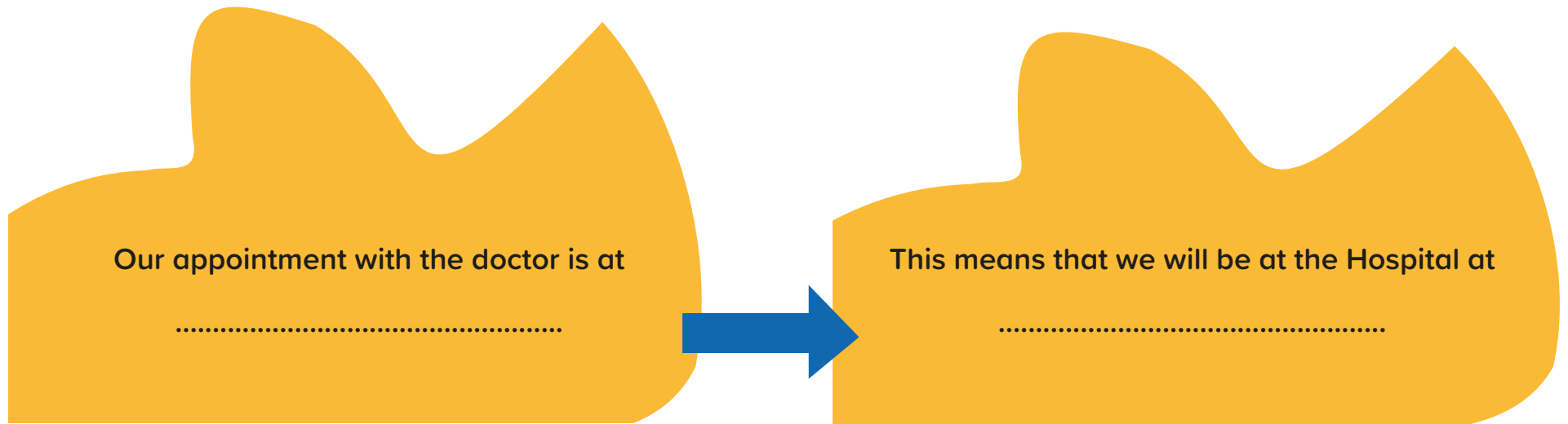


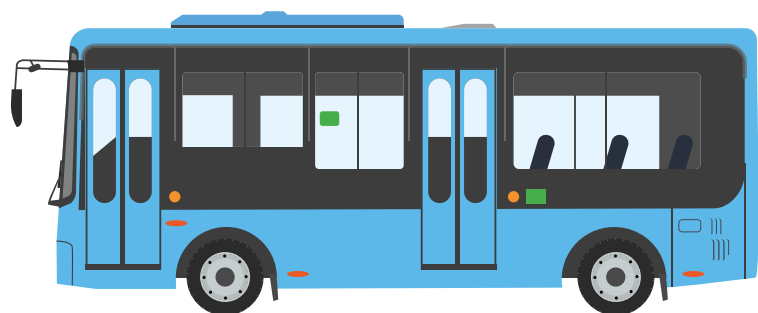
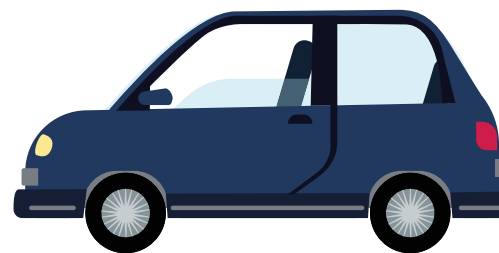
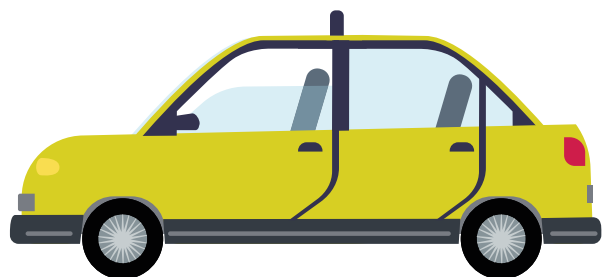
The day has come to go to the Hospital for medical examinations.

I feel:



It is important to be at the Hospital a little earlier than our appointment with the doctor.





We will get to the hospital by (means of transport).

Remember:

✓ I take care of my things

✓ I listen to (name of carer)

✓ If I need help,

I will tell(name of carer)

If I manage to remember these things,
then everything will turn out fine at the Hospital!



Attention!

Before you leave for the hospital, remember to:

Have previously contacted the hospital you will visit, in order to:

Be Informed about the Hospital's policy regarding to visitors with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs.
Each hospital has its own policy.

Have the needs of the person with ASD clearly stated (e.g. have informed the hospital personnel about the way the person with ASD communicates, whether he/she has difficulties managing noise or lights etc.).

Have arranged details in relation to medical examinations (e.g. medical history of the person with ASD).

Also:

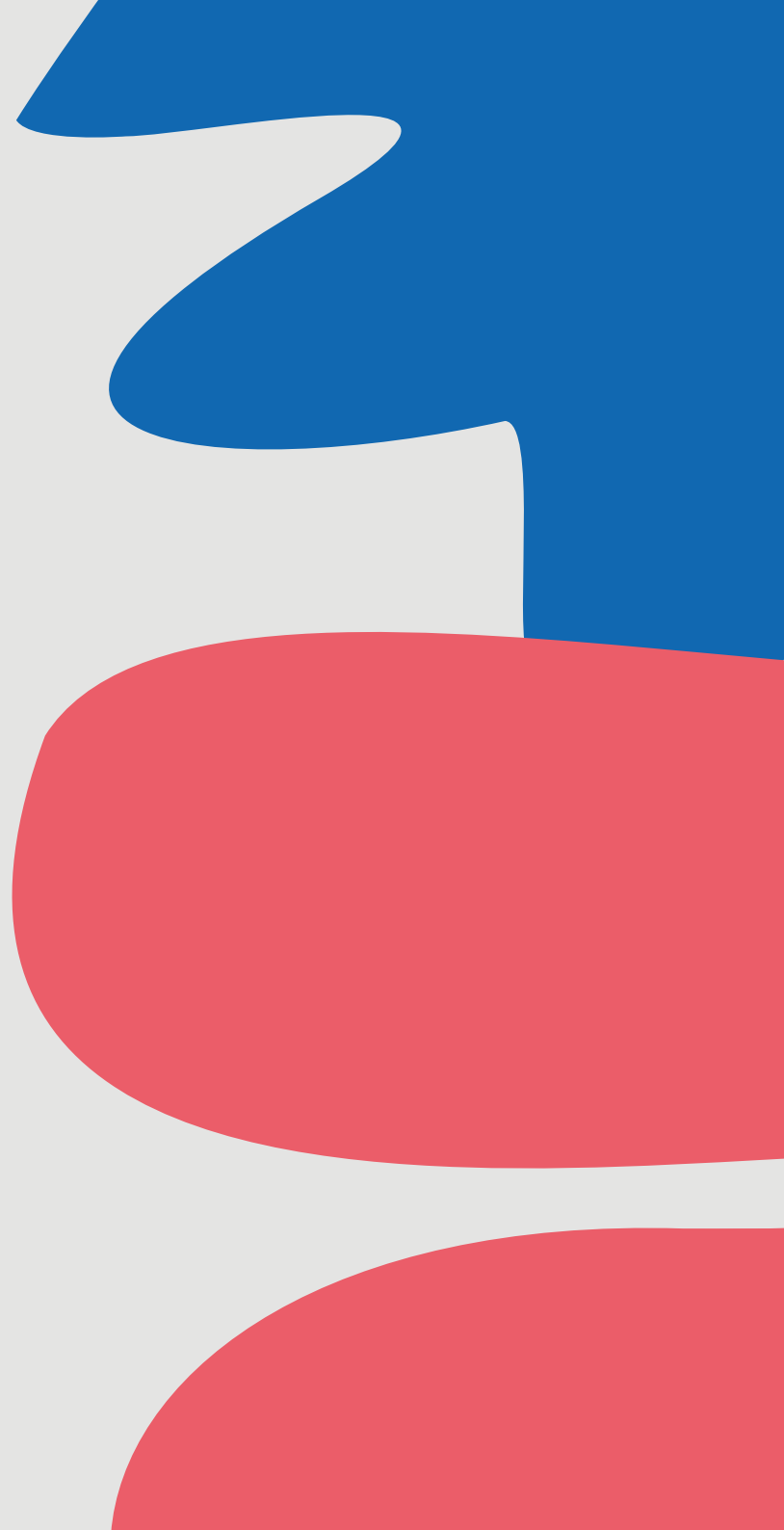
It is important to consider, when choosing a means of transport to the hospital, that the person with ASD should have the least possible exposure to stressful stimuli prior to the hospital visit and medical examinations.

It is recommended – if possible – to use a private means of transport, which involves minimal transitions and is familiar to the person with ASD. Also, public transport may be used provided that the person is sufficiently familiar with such transport prior to the hospital visit.



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Arrival at the Hospital and referral receipt





When we arrive at the Hospital, we will go in via the Outpatient Clinic entrance.



There might be a lot of people at the Hospital. It might be noisy.

.....
This is expected!



Remember:

At the hospital:

- ✓ I have my Health Insurance Card and wallet with me.
- ✓ I am quiet.
- ✓ I stay close to _____ (carer's name) and listen carefully to his/her instructions.



We will visit the **reception** (desk/payment counter) to get the **referral** (the document that lists the medical examinations I am going to have) and pay.

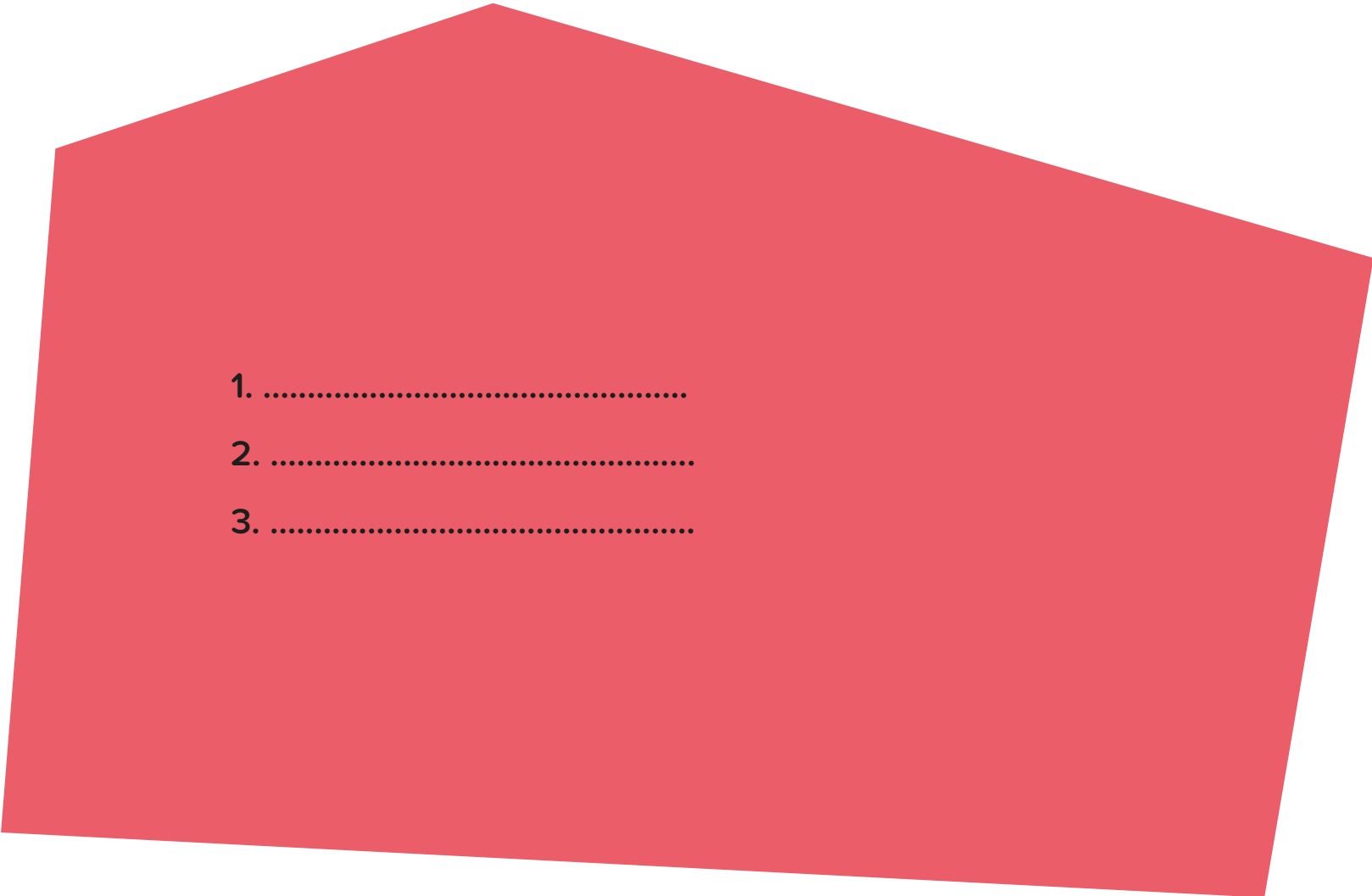


Usually, people wait in line to get their referral.



I will also try to wait patiently in line to get my referral.

While waiting in line to get my referral, I can...



1.

2.

3.



Soon it will be my turn to get my referral.



Remember:

When it is my turn to get a referral:

- ✓ I give my personal data/ information details.
- ✓ I listen carefully to the employee's instructions.
 - ✓ I answer carefully.
 - ✓ I am polite!
- ✓ If I need help, I can ask
(name of carer or hospital liaison)



At the Reception:

The employee will give me the referral

- ✓ I will pay
- ✓ I will say goodbye and
- ✓ I will leave.



**I am very happy! I made it!
I've got my referral to visit the doctor.**

Attention!

Remember during your arrival at the hospital and the issue of the referral:

- Supply the health staff with details of any special characteristics and preferences of the person with ASD, in order to ensure the provision of the best possible conditions (e.g. to avoid waiting in line, you may request priority when given your referral).
- Prepare the person with ASD that they may need to briefly interrupt what they are doing, so they can pick up their referral.

Also:

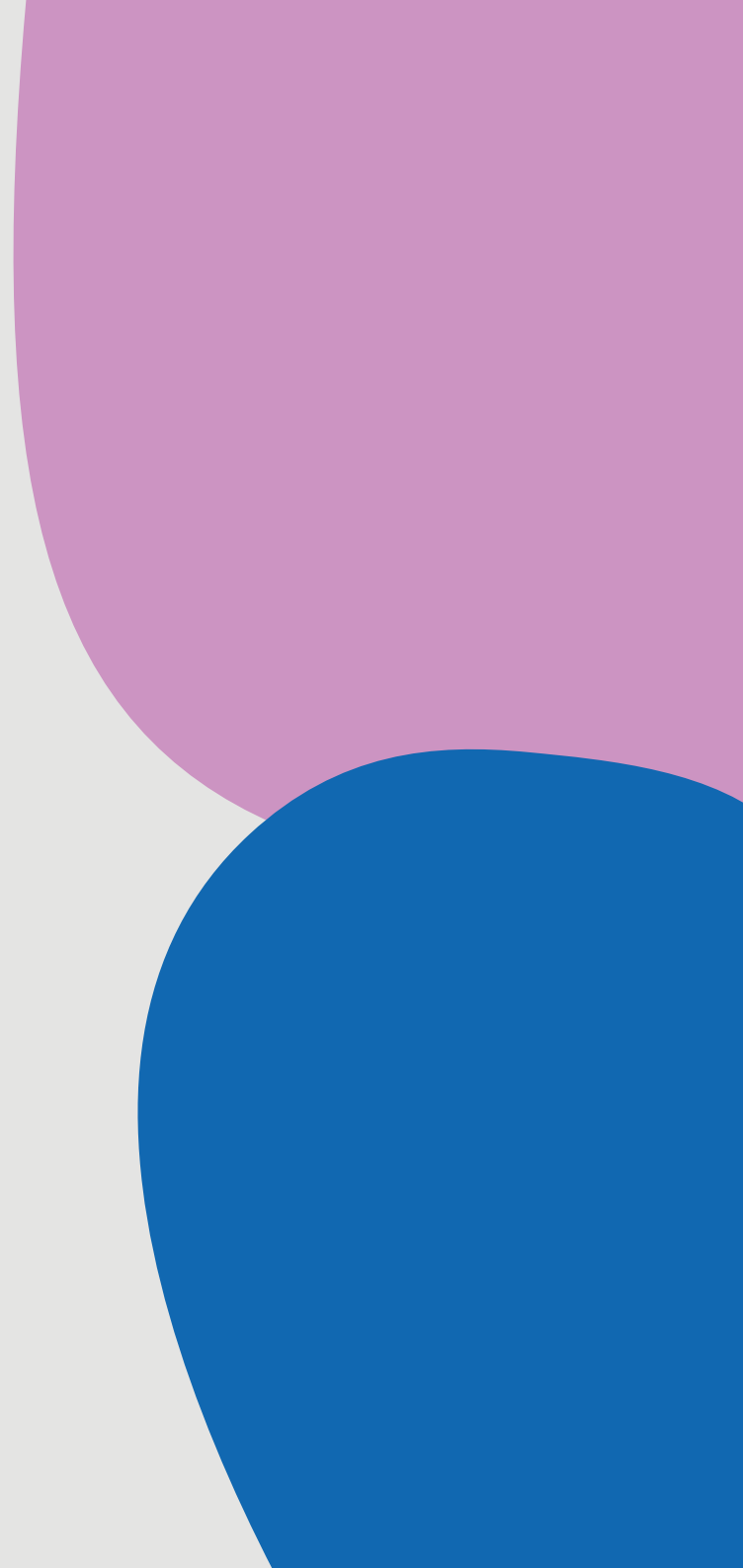
It would help to have performed a simulation of these specific exchanges prior to your visit to the hospital. More specifically, it would help the person with ASD, upon approaching the desk/payment counter, to be prepared to:

- Give the necessary personal information – orally or in writing.
 - Carry out the monetary transaction themselves, in any way they are sufficiently familiar with.



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Waiting Room





After I get my referral, we move to the **waiting room** (where I will have to wait). This looks like a living room.

Remember:

✓ I hold on to my bag and the documents I was given at the desk carefully. My bag and the documents are my responsibility.

✓ I am quiet.

✓ I stay close to..... (carer's name)
and listen carefully to his/her instructions.



When we reach the waiting room, we sit at the lounge.
We might need to wait a while.

This is expected!

Everybody is waiting!

While I wait in the waiting room, I can...

1.
2.
3.



When it is my turn, a nurse will call my number or my name.



Then, I will stand up and follow him/her to the doctor's office.



I am so happy to be visiting the doctor's office soon.

Attention!

Prepare the person with ASD that they:

- Might have to wait a while longer in the waiting room. It would be preferable to prepare the person with ASD in case they have to wait longer than you have estimated or have been told, so as to help them remain calm in case of a delay in the appointment.
- Might briefly interrupt what they are doing in order to go quickly to the doctor's office.

Also:

It would help to be informed about the hospital's policy about the way they address visitors in the waiting room. For example, the nurse may let someone know it's their turn by either calling their last name or calling out the last three digits of their Registration Number. You will therefore be able to choose the best way to meet the needs of the person with ASD and, of course, it would help to have practiced a simulation of this particular situation prior to the hospital visit.



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Doctor's office

Preparation for the medical examinations





At the doctor's office, it will probably be me, the doctor, maybe the nurse and (carer's name).



Upon entering the doctor's office, I will give my referral to the nurse.



I will hang my bag and jacket.



It is important to wait and listen to the instructions of the doctor and the nurse.

If I listen carefully to the instructions of the doctor and the nurse,
everything will turn out fine!



Attention!

When visiting the doctor's office, remember it is important to:

- Ensure that the doctor and the nurse are aware of the diagnosis of the person that is coming for an examination.
- Inform them briefly about the main characteristics of the person with ASD (e.g. language level).
- Remind the person with ASD at an appropriate time that they have to let go of their personal belongings for a while, pointing to the respective step of the social story.



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Blood pressure measurement / Check



The nurse will measure my blood pressure with a blood pressure monitor.



The blood pressure monitor looks like a thermometer that has a piece of cloth on its end (cuff).



Remember:

- ✓ I listen carefully to the instructions of the doctor and the nurse.

- The nurse will place the cuff around my arm.
- The cuff will begin to inflate and squeeze my arm.
- I might feel a bit strange.
- It is like someone is hugging me.
- It is like someone is hugging my arm tightly.



This is normal!

.....
**Everybody feels
this way!**

Remember:

- ✓ I stay still while the nurse is measuring my blood pressure.
- ✓ I refrain from talking.

**Shortly, the nurse will finish
and remove the cuff from my arm.**



I am glad I made it and the test is over. I did great!





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Cardiogram





**When I visit the Hospital, I will also need to have a cardiogram.
The cardiogram is like a photograph of the heart.**



**It is important to have a cardiogram,
because this way the doctor will know if my heart is working fine.**



The doctor or the nurse will ask me to take off my shirt and lie on the bed.



It is important to try and lie on my back.



When I lie down, the nurse will apply:

- A little water on my chest, arms, and legs with a cotton ball;
- the electrodes on my chest (they look like small bubbles, suction cups/stickers);
- something that looks like pegs on my arms and legs.



I might then feel a bit strange.
I might feel something cold and wet.

This is expected!

**Most people having
a cardiogram feel
the same!**



Remember:

- ✓ I lie still while the doctor is performing the cardiogram.
- ✓ I refrain from talking.
- ✓ I listen carefully to the instructions of the doctor and the nurse.

The electrodes have cables connected to a machine that looks like a computer.

A paper full of lines will come out from this machine. This paper shows how my heart beats.



When the cardiogram is over,
the nurse will carefully remove the electrodes.

I might then feel a bit strange.
If I want, I can ask to help the nurse
remove them.



This is expected!

.....
**Most people may feel the
same when they have the
electrodes removed.**



The doctor and (carer's name) are very glad the test is over.



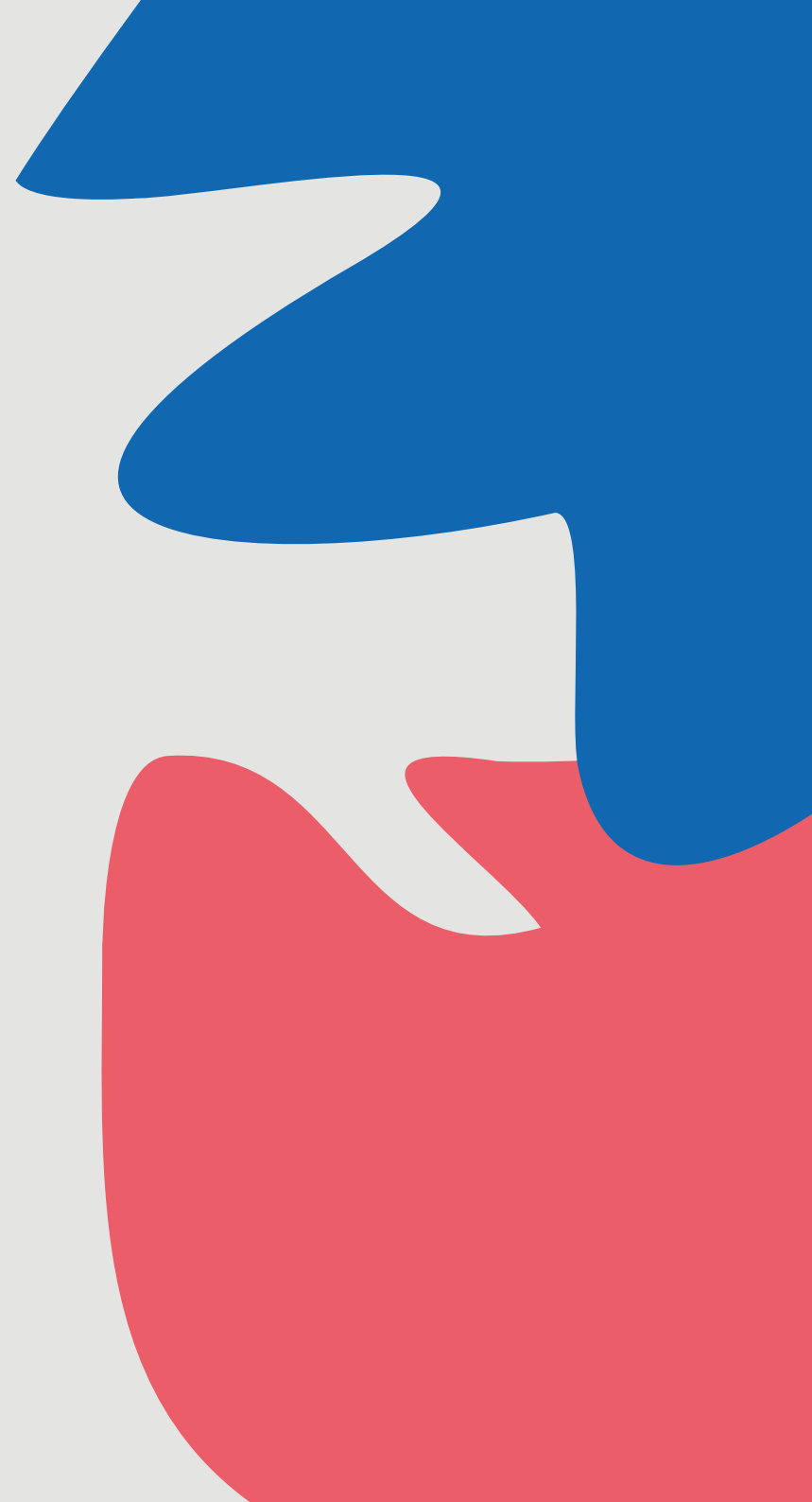
I am proud of myself for doing so well with the cardiogram!





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Heart ultrasound





The ultrasound looks like a camera that shows how my heart beats.



The doctor or the nurse will ask me to take off my shirt and lie on the bed.



It is important to try to:

- lie on my side and
- place my left arm under my head.

If I need help, I can ask (carer's name).



Remember:

- ✓ I listen carefully to the instructions of the doctor and the nurse.



The doctor will apply **gel** (a thick liquid) on a medical tool and place it on my chest.



**I might then feel a bit strange.
I might feel something cold and wet, pressing against my chest.**

This is expected!

**Most people having an
ultrasound feel the same!**



Remember:

- ✓ I lie still while the doctor is performing the ultrasound.
- ✓ I refrain from talking.
- ✓ I listen carefully to the instructions of the doctor and the nurse.

The doctor or the nurse may ask me to lie on my back, with my knees raised, and then may place the medical tool on my chest one more time.

Shortly, the ultrasound will be over, and the nurse will offer me a piece of paper to wipe the gel off my chest.





Remember:

- ✓ I lie still while the doctor is performing the ultrasound.
- ✓ I refrain from talking.
- ✓ I listen carefully to the instructions of the doctor and the nurse.



The doctor and (carer's name) are very happy the test is over.



I am proud of myself for doing so well with the ultrasound!

Attention!

It would help to simulate the procedure of the medical examinations prior to your visit to the hospital.

For instance, it will benefit the person with ASD if a simulation has been performed on:

- The use of a blood pressure monitor for checking the pressure.
- The application of a small quantity of water, using a cotton ball, on the chest, arms, and legs of the person with ASD, as per undertaking a cardiogram.
 - The person's body position during the heart ultrasound (e.g. placing the left arm under the head, while the person lies down on his/her side).

Also:

During medical examinations, and especially during cardiac tests, it is important that patients remain silent, calm, and still.

You may, at that point, need to help the person with ASD follow some relaxation techniques they have been taught in the past (e.g. drawing deep breaths, counting to 10, etc.), by pointing to the respective step of the social story.



**ONASSIS
EDUCATION**

Completing the Medical Examinations



**When I finish my cardiac tests,
I will quickly put my clothes on and wait for the doctor's instructions.**



The doctor may need to speak to me and (carer's name).
..... (carer's name) may want to ask the doctor some questions.

I will try to wait patiently and listen carefully to the doctor and (carer's name).



When I finish my medical examinations, the doctor or the nurse will hand me an envelope with the results of my examinations.



Then, I can say goodbye and go home and rest.



My parents will be very proud that I did so well with the medical examinations.

And I am going to be proud of myself! I made it!



Attention!

It would be good to praise or congratulate the person with ASD after the completion of the medical examinations.

The doctor may congratulate the person with ASD by saying, for instance:

“Good job (name)!
You made it,
you are through with your medical examinations!”
(or something similar).

Also:

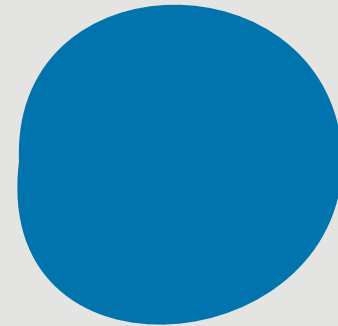
Remember there is an option of directly receiving the results of certain examinations (e.g. cardiogram).





**ONASSIS
EDUCATION**

Medical Examinations' Results



When I visited the Hospital, they gave me a document with instructions for the examinations' results.

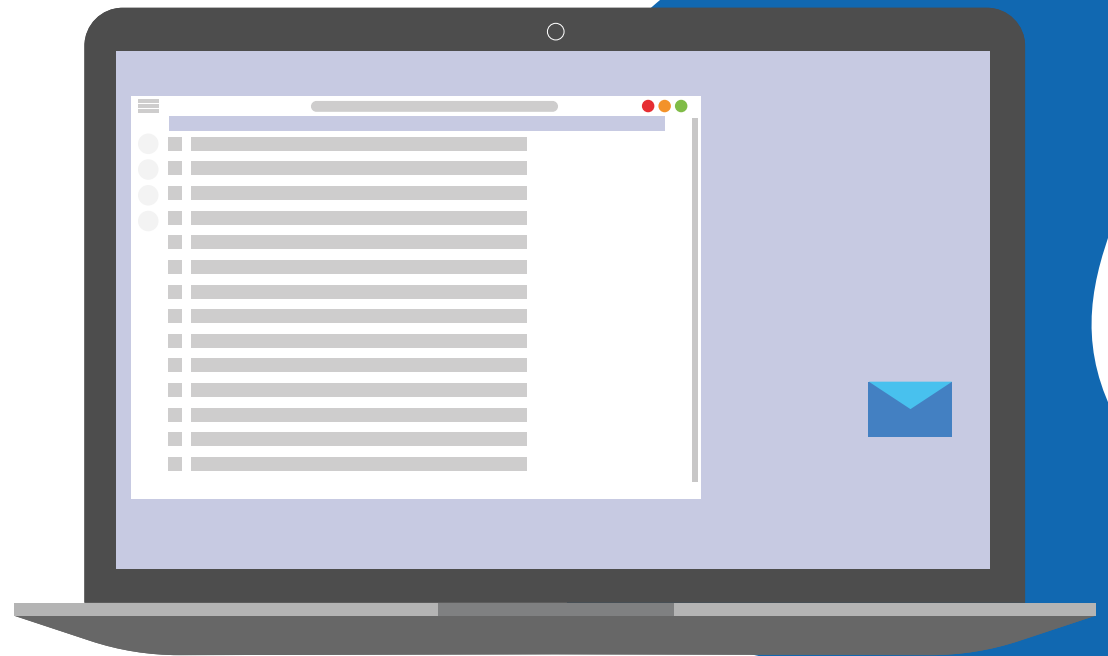


Instructions

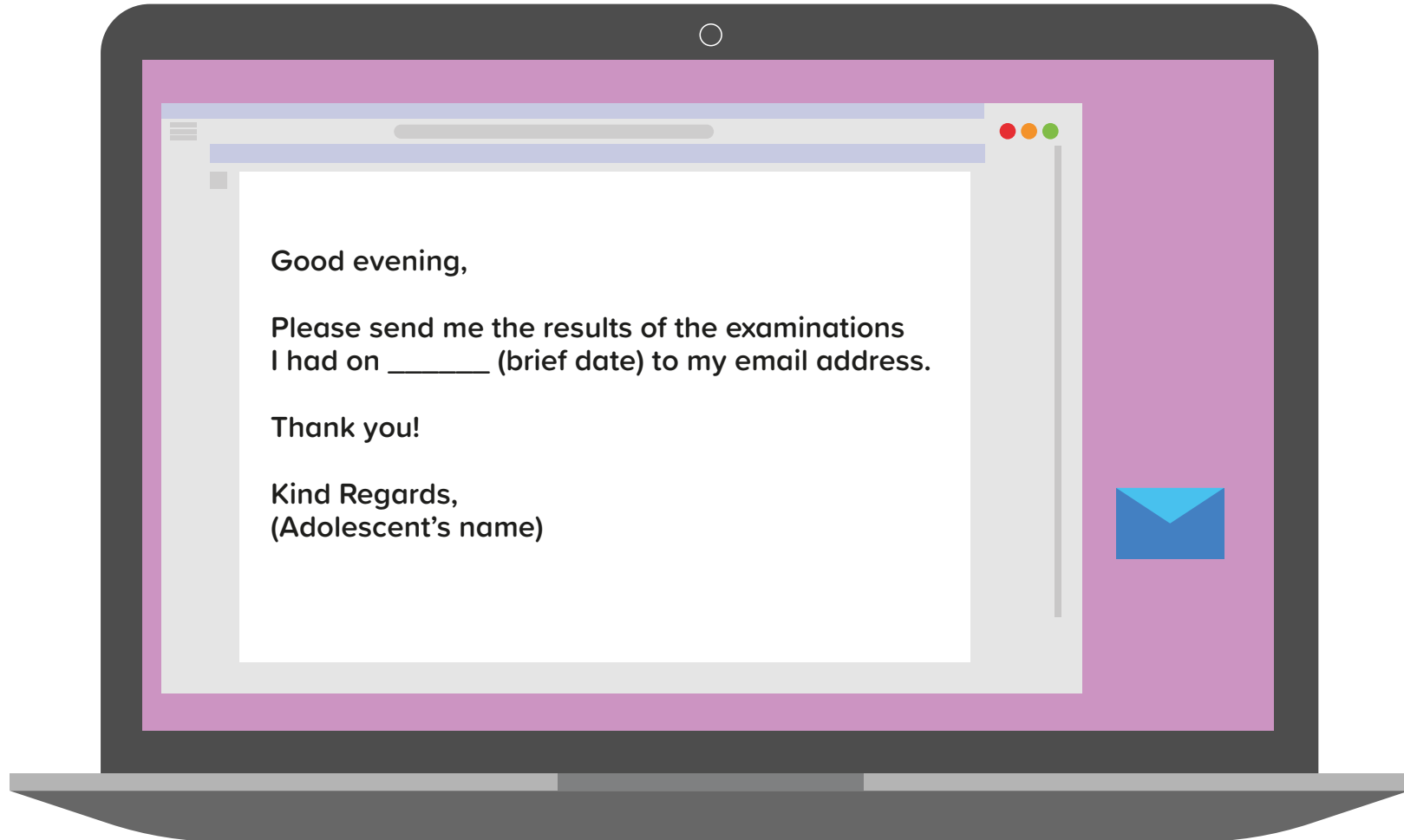
How to receive
your results/findings

To receive the results of my examinations:

- I need to wait three days after my visit to the Hospital.
- I need to send an email to the Hospital asking for the results.
- I need to wait for the results to be emailed to me.



In my email, I can say:



I am proud that I sent the email, and I will now wait for the results of my examinations!



Attention!

It would help to have previously contacted the hospital you are going to visit, in order to become informed on their protocol for delivering results and findings.

Guidelines from the Onassis Cardiac Surgery Center

During the scheduling of the examinations, make sure that you have informed the reception of the outpatient clinic of the needs and the type of assistance that needs to be provided to the patient.

Describe the real needs of the patient in a clear and precise manner.

Upon the patient's arrival to the registry of the outpatient clinic or the reception desk, let us know that you have arrived, immediately.

The health staff of the OCSC is always at your disposition.

It is recommended to contact the respective hospital, so that you are informed of the protocol of operation and the policy followed by each hospital with regards to its visitors with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs.



Onassis Foundation and Special Education

All children can learn, each one just has its own way. The Onassis Foundation, for the past ten years, has been involved in the provision of educational activities in the field of Special Education. Today, supported by the trust of each parent of the participating children, we continue to devise a series of workshops with the objective to help as many children as possible, in Greece, to release their potential. And while the means may change, the goal remains the same: providing access to as many children as possible to our workshops, encouraging inclusion in their favorite activities, and developing children's abilities through cooperative practices. Both parents and children should have the right to 'escape' from the everyday.

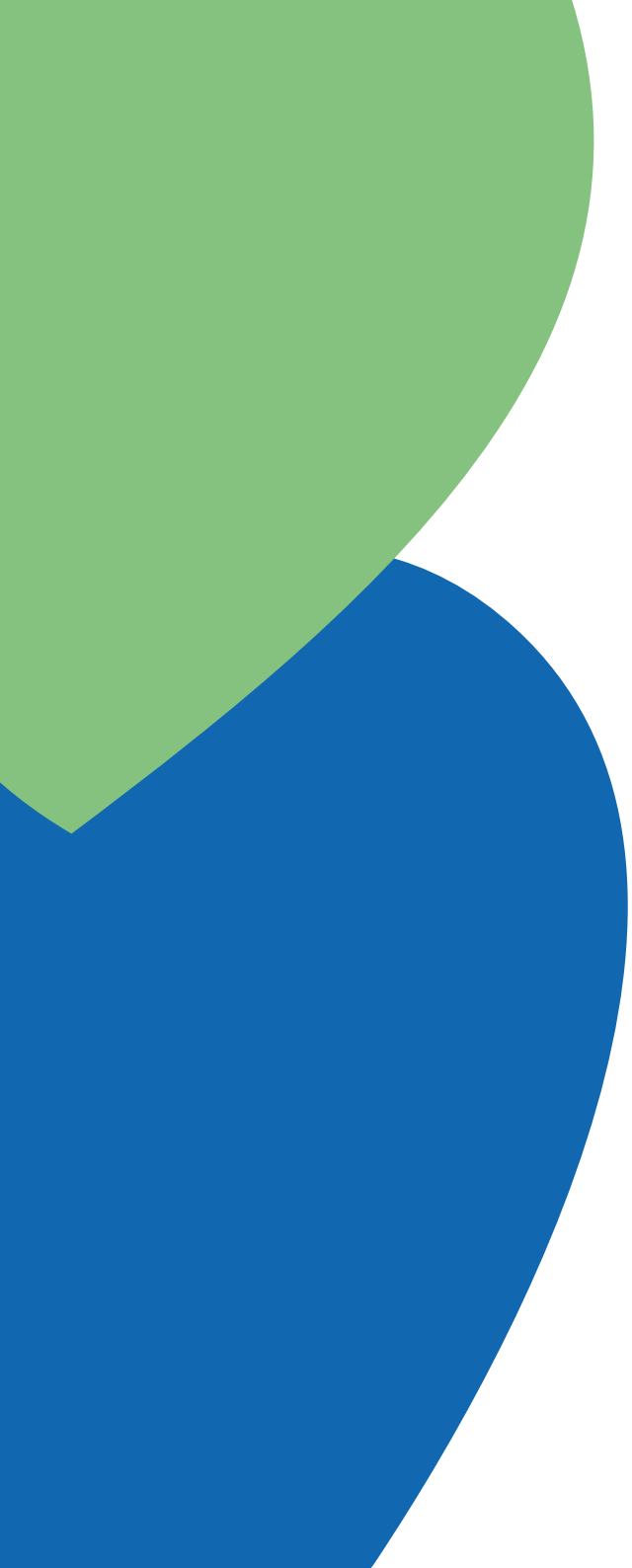
A different approach to learning

Through the educational programs of the Special Education initiative of the Onassis Foundation, we develop meaningful activities employing the magic of music and/or artistic expression to help parents discover new and creative ways of communicating with their children. At the same time, the Onassis Foundation joins forces with even more institutions and schools of Special Education throughout Greece, which seek to support common initiatives. "Music loves autism", "Boarding Pass for Autism", "The art of togetherness", "Life like an open book", "Training in autism: Raising awareness of the staff of the Greek Police, of the Police of the Municipality of Athens, and of the Cypriot Police" are just some of the educational programs of the Onassis Foundation. Complementary to the above programs, we organize hands-on

Special Education workshops for educators and others active in the field of Special Education, as well as for broader professional public groups, with the aim to raise awareness in society.

For us, Special Education is the path for all children to gain access to knowledge, art, and the joys of learning. After all, each child has its own style, rhythm, and time, not only in how they learn, but also in how they succeed.

The Onassis Foundation's activities in the area of Special Education are not limited to educational programs. For decades now, the Foundation supports special schools and integration programs through the donation of books, equipment, and teaching aids, in order to enhance the educational efforts of Greek educators. Moreover, our Scholarship Program founded in 1978 and run by the Foundation, includes post-graduate studies and doctoral research in the area of Special Education in higher education departments around the world, while it supports, throughout the years, institutions, such as ELEPAP (Rehabilitation for the Disabled) in their valuable and difficult work.



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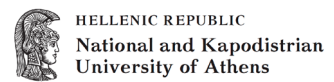




**UNDER
STAND
AUTISM**

**ONASSIS
EDUCATION**

Under the auspices of the



In collaboration with



Onassis
Cardiac Surgery
Center