

## Covid 19

### **Guide to Accessible and Friendly Communication for Children and Adults who have Intellectual Disability and/or Autism**

Please speak slowly, be clear and accurate and say what you mean.  
Some people need time to process what is said, some are very literal.  
Use signs, pictures and gestures to support communication as needed.  
Always ask the person what may help.

- Use plain simple language
- Speak slower
- Speak to the person themselves
- Give plenty of time for a response
- Use pictures if possible but only when needed
- Use family or friends as a 'communication partner' if needed
- Use easy-to-read information if available e.g. [www.inclusionireland.ie](http://www.inclusionireland.ie) or [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)



**Communication with adults:** Remember every adult is presumed to have capacity to make his or her own decisions unless there is evidence to the contrary. With the consent of the person, family and friends can assist in identifying the will and preferences of the person receiving care, support or treatment.

**Be Aware:** In medical situations, when triaging or treating, some individuals with an intellectual disability, for example [Down Syndrome](#), may present atypically with serious illness (e.g. fever may be masked) and co-morbidities are common. Ask how they normally feel when ill.

#### **Before - Preparation for a new place, a new experience**

The building: What does it look like, and what is the layout? Is there a plan or photos of the premises to look at before visiting?

What will happen? Can easy to read information about the appointment, meeting or event be made available beforehand?

If needed, can additional support or queuing priority be requested as part of planning for an appointment, meeting or event?

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#### **An Accessible and Friendly Venue**

**Access:** Parking, entrances, waiting areas and meeting rooms etc. are fully accessible. Signs, queuing systems and instructions are clearly visible, easy to read and understand.

**Lighting:** Check the lights in each area. If possible, avoid fluorescent or compact fluorescent bulbs, if you can, as they can appear to flicker like a strobe light to people with autism. Also, try to avoid bright spotlights. Repair or replace flickering light bulbs.

**Noise levels:** If there is a lot of background noise at the venue, is there a quieter space available if needed?

**Support:** If needed, is someone friendly available to meet on arrival and support through the process?

Can they give really clear instructions e.g. where to go, where to sit, when to proceed and what to do at each point?

In medical situations, in particular before any physical contact please warn, take it slowly and talk through what will happen. Please say what you will do and then do what you say.

Is a person with experience of supporting people with disabilities available for this support role?



#### **Accessibility as part of the way you work**

Ask is your service or information easy to use for people with intellectual disability?

Talk to people with intellectual disability about their experience of the service.

Provide information, education and training on accessibility for all staff. Work steadily to make any changes needed.