



Strategies and Resources: **Health Tips**

The **NHS App** is available with a lot of features and information- requesting appointments, managing repeat prescriptions, symptom checker. Follow this link for information: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-app/>

Managing expectations - many autistic people can be very logical in their approach. This is often a strength however, it can make it tough to accept that sometimes concerning our health, a reason can't be pinpointed.

For example, your GP may never be able to give you a 100% certainty about where a rash on your leg came from. It could be caused by many different things, and you may just never know. This can feel hard to accept, especially if it is something we want to protect ourselves from in the future.

Mental health - unfortunately some people's experience of their GP has been that their diagnosed mental health condition has overshadowed other co-occurring conditions. Feelings of chronic fatigue for example have been attributed to depression when in fact it may be a sign of numerous different things.

You are the best expert on yourself. You know your body and what may have changed or just doesn't feel right. Don't be afraid to persevere if you think there is something wrong that your doctor is just not getting. Ask to talk to someone else.

Some nurse practitioners can be approachable and understanding and may be of help if you are struggling to be heard. If you still feel brushed off seek support from someone independent like a family member or trusted friend.

As an outpatient - if you are scheduled for an outpatient appointment, you can ring up beforehand and let the relevant staff know you are autistic and what your needs are. In some cases, you may even be able to arrange to visit the department to familiarise with the environment. Always check first. (This is not applicable in A&E).

Your information - request copy letters from appointments with specialists. This is usually the information from the specialist to your GP. You can request a copy of this information. This can be useful as it can be difficult to process and retain information given verbally during the appointment itself.

Some common physical issues which can co-occur with autism - difficulties with joints and joint pain, hypermobility, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), general lower than average immunity possibly related to consistent high anxiety and stress, poor diet etc.

Muscle pain is common possibly because anxiety can cause you to be tensed up a lot of the time. To combat this, try to be mindful of your body and relax your muscles where possible. Headaches from sensory sensitivities to light.

Dark glasses may help. Irlen syndrome and dyslexia can be helped with coloured overlays for text or coloured lenses or contacts. 'Nightmode' in phones and computers can be useful if the brightness of screen is causing pain or discomfort.

Difficulties processing pain - some autistic people may struggle to feel and process pain. This may mean they don't know when to stop pushing themselves and take a break. There may also be difficulties connecting where pain is to point it out or what type of pain it is.


Pain Thresholds - many autistic people report having extremely low or high tolerances for pain. It may be necessary to let a doctor or medical professional know about this when being treated.

For example, if you have a high pain threshold you may be presenting in a way that doesn't give cause for urgent medical care, when this may not be the case. Medical professionals need to be aware of this.

Equally, a low threshold may require a different approach - slower or more sensitive, explaining what is happening and what needs to happen next, for example.

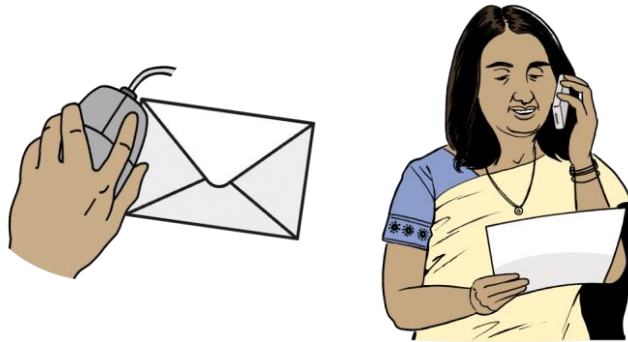
Useful links:

- The Bradford and Craven Autism AIM Health Access Project can help if you are struggling to either access local GP services or want help to communicate your healthcare needs: <https://bradfordautismaim.org.uk/services/health-access-project>
 - The Health Access Project team have some useful resources to help communicate pain and fatigue, record symptoms and emotions: <https://bradfordautismaim.org.uk/resources>

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- The National Autistic Society have created a free passport for use in hospitals and other healthcare settings: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/physical-health/my-health-passport>

Contact Us

This guide was produced by **Autism AIM**, part of The Advonet Group. We are a free service co-led by and run for autistic adults (aged 18+) in the Leeds, Bradford and Craven areas.



- Email us at **leedsautismaim@advonet.org.uk** for Leeds and **bradfordautismaim@advonet.org.uk** for Bradford and Craven
- Call The Advonet Group's office on **0113 244 0606** and ask for someone from the Autism AIM team
- Follow us on Facebook at **@leedsautismaim** and **@bradfordautismaim**
- Follow us on Twitter at **@leedsautismaim** and **@bradfordautismaim**

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