

Healthcare Transition

Healthcare Transition and Autism

What Is Healthcare Transition And Why Is It Hard?



- Healthcare Transition is when a young adult changes from pediatric care to adult care.
- For many families of young adults with autism this is a challenging process.
- Most families want and need help with the healthcare transition process, but only 20-40% find the help they need!
- Many primary care doctors who treat adults do not have a lot of experience treating patients with ASD.

What Can Autism Specialists Do To Help?



- Offer online training classes for primary care doctors who want to learn more about ASD.
- Give families medical summaries to give to their new doctor.
- Make a list of local doctors who treat adults with ASD.
- Make special appointments to talk to families about the healthcare transition process.
- Use a checklist to make sure the transition process goes well!

What Should Parents Do?



- Talk with your young adult's pediatrician and learn about the transition to adult healthcare.
- Ask your pediatrician for a list of doctors they recommend.
- Ask for a medical summary to take to your new doctor!
- Ask for an appointment to talk about the healthcare transition process.
- Ask for a checklist for the healthcare transition process so you can track your progress!
- Speak with your young adult's new doctor and ask if they would be open to taking an online class to learn more about ASD.

As kids and teens with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) grow into adults, they will have to change doctors. This transition from pediatric care to adult care can be difficult for teens with ASD and their families. Often there is little or no information about the transition process for families and when families try to find a new primary care provider, they struggle to find doctors

who know about treating adult patients with ASD.^{1; 2; 3} Only 20-40% of kids and teens with ASD get help with making the transition to adult health care.^{1; 2}

There are now online training classes to help more doctors feel comfortable treating adult patients with ASD. Doctors who take these online classes feel more confident and knowledgeable treating patients with ASD.³ Families can ask their pediatricians to help their patients with ASD make a successful transition to adult health care by: 1) Giving families medical summaries to give to their new doctor, 2) Making a list of local doctors who treat adults with ASD, 3) Making appointments with their pediatricians to talk to families about the transition process, and 4) Using checklists to make sure the transition process goes well.¹

**Disclaimer: This summary is based on research conducted by Autism Treatment Network (ATN) members. It is not a summary of the entire body of research literature available on this subject*

Frequently Asked Questions

HEALTHCARE TRANSITION PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED WITH ASD:

- Many families of teens and young adults with ASD struggle when it is time to change from a pediatrician to a primary care doctor.^{1; 2}

WHAT DOES HEALTHCARE TRANSITION LOOK LIKE FOR PATIENTS WITH AUTISM?

- Changing primary care doctors from a pediatrician to a doctor who sees adult patients.
- Only 20-40% of families of teens with ASD get help with making this change.
- Many primary care doctors who only see adults do not have experience treating patients with ASD.^{1; 2; 3}

WHAT CAN AUTISM SPECIALISTS DO TO HELP?

- Some doctors who specialize in treating autism are offering online classes for primary care doctors who want to learn about ASD.²
- Give families medical summaries to give to their new doctor.
- Make a list of local doctors who treat adults with ASD.
- Make appointments to talk to families about the healthcare transition process.
- Use checklists to make sure the transition process goes well.¹

WHAT SHOULD PARENTS DO?

- Talk with your health care provider to learn about transition to adult health care.
- If you are not sure how to find a new doctor for your young adult, ask the pediatrician for a list of doctors they recommend.
- Find out what information the new doctor will need in order to begin working with your young adult.
- Request a medical summary to place in your files at home so you can have it available to take to future appointments as you find new doctors and specialists!
- Ask for an appointment with the pediatrician just to talk about the transition process. Have a list of questions written to take into the appointment to ensure you do not forget an important point.

- Ask for a checklist for the transition process so that you can track the progress towards a successful healthcare transition! If your pediatrician does not have one, check your Community and Online Resources.
- Speak with the new doctor and ask if they would be open to taking an online class to learn more about autism. Tap into your Community Resources to find the name of an online training class for physicians that you can recommend to him. You can also check with your local Autism Treatment Center or Autism Speaks website.

References

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3. Mazurek, M.O., Stobbe, G., Loftin, R., Malow, B.A., Agrawal, M.M., Tapia, M., Hess, A., Farmer, J., Cheak-Zamora, N., Kuhlthau, K.A., Sohl, K. (2019). ECHO Autism Transition: Enhancing healthcare for adolescents and young adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism*. <http://asatn.org/node/2949>