

## Air Travel Tips

Air travel can be intimidating for families of children with autism. From ears popping, loud and unfamiliar noises, and confined spaces, being on a plane is often overwhelming for anyone with or without special needs. Below are some helpful tips when planning a vacation including air travel.

**Book a Direct Flight:** If possible, book a direct flight. A direct flight will ease some of the stress you encounter (hassle in the aisles and ears popping).

**Seat Arrangement:** When booking your flight, consider the seating chart of the plane to accommodate your child's needs. Be sure to confirm your seat at the airport prior to boarding to avoid any last-minute changes or issues.

**Make a go-bag:** Fill a bag with pre-established calming tools. Some examples are:

- Noise-canceling earmuffs
- Chewing gum
- Hat
- Weighted blanket
- Headphones with music or game
- Lap pad
- Fidget toys; silly putty; worry stone
- Bottled water
- Healthy snacks
- A favorite toy or stuffed animal

**Start small:** If possible, take your child on a short flight to start. This will help you both become acquainted with the realistic expectations of a longer flight.

**Priority Boarding:** You can opt in for priority boarding, or board last: whichever is easiest for your family. Just let the airline personnel know and they will work with your needs.

**Practice:** Call the airport to see if they have an autism access program in place. They may let you take a practice run through airport security.

**Sensitive to Loud Sounds:** If your child is sensitive to loud sounds, the front of the plane is the quietest area to sit in. Many flight attendants and other passengers will gladly assist you in switching seats. Additionally, headphones and watching some preferred games or videos can help combat the unfamiliar noises in the airplane.

**Taking Shoes Off:** You can prevent potential tantrums by removing their shoes as soon as they are seated and place them under the seat in front of you.

**Pressing the Call Buttons:** If your child likes to press the call buttons, let the flight attendants know ahead of time. You can provide an alternative object with buttons to push instead.

**Kicking the Seat:** Many kids, with or without autism, will kick the seat in front of them. You may want to request an aisle or bulkhead seat for more legroom.

**Safety Precautions:** Each airline is required to explain the emergency exit plan and process. Limit distractions for your child during this procedure. You may want to wait to give them their toys as a reward for paying attention to this pre-flight training.

**Landing:** You may want to make arrangements similar to priority boarding so your family can exit the plane first to avoid the crowd and any hustle issues in the aisle.

If you have questions, please contact us.

Thank you.

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