

Telehealth: Tips for helping kids with autism take part

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(HealthDay)—Telehealth is increasing in popularity in the United States,

partly due to the pandemic. But some children with autism have difficulty sitting through these virtual appointments.

Yet those visits can be a helpful part of a [child's](#) ongoing [medical care](#), and their convenience may help limit time away from work and school, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics' Healthy Children website.

Dr. Kristin Sohl, a [pediatrician](#) with University of Missouri Health Care, offers some tips for making these [visits](#) successful.

It's best when your child sees the same doctors because they know your child and are familiar with their needs, Sohl said in an academy news release.

Also, it's important to talk with your pediatrician about how you and your child like to be seen for medical care. This will help determine when it is the right time for an in-person visit or a telehealth visit, she noted.

Preparation can help the appointments go more smoothly. Find out in advance which parts of the visit the pediatrician would like your child to participate in, and during which parts your child can take breaks.

Share tips with the pediatrician about ways to communicate with your child that you've found work well, Sohl suggested. Let your child have their favorite toy, stuffed animal, book or other item to show the doctor.

Prepare your space, too. Practice logging in before the appointment and double check your equipment, including the camera, microphone and internet connection. If you or your child needs accommodations, call the pediatrician's office to request an interpreter service or communication assistance.

Think ahead about where you want to be with your child for the appointment so that you are comfortable sharing [medical information](#) with the doctor, Sohl said.

Show your child what to expect beforehand, to help them be comfortable with a telehealth visit. Try using tools like social stories or visual schedules or simple first/then boards, Sohl advised. You can ask your doctor if they have these or other tools.

Tell your child that they will see their doctor on the computer or phone screen. Point out that they can talk and show things to the doctor just like in person.

Some final tips: Of course, do not drive during a telehealth appointment. Be sure to have your child with you since it is their appointment. Make notes of stories or examples of your child's progress to share, and have your questions ready.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [autism spectrum disorder](#).

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