

# Safety Resource Guide



The Autism Program  
AT BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER



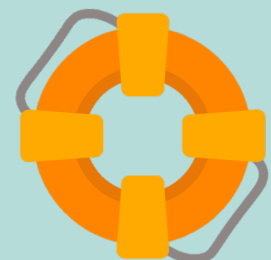
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<https://www.bmc.org/autism-program>



The Autism Program at Boston Medical Center strives to assist and empower individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. In this guide, we will discuss topics around safety within the home and in the community, including internet safety, tracking services, water safety, and more.

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## QR Codes: How-To

Throughout our guide, we will often reference helpful resources such as potential home installations, Internet safety softwares, safety trackers, and more. In these cases, we will include a QR code close by, so you can learn more.

### If you are reading this guide online:

Simply click on the QR codes to visit the resource website

### If you are reading a hard copy of this guide:

Open your camera app on your phone or a QR-reader app, and scan the QR code to visit the resource website



## Securing the Home

If your child has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or a similar disorder, it is important to take time to make your home a safe and comfortable environment. Here are some tips:

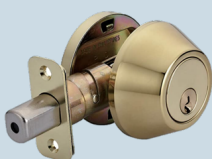
**Disclosure: The Autism Program is not sponsored or related to any of these companies or services.**

### 1. Install **Additional Locks**

Deadbolts offer a greater degree of security than regular spring bolt locks, because:

- They cannot be opened except by rotating the lock cylinder.
- They cannot be opened with a credit card.
- They are thicker and go twice as deep as spring bolts

**Click on or visit the QR codes below to check out how to install deadbolts in your home!**



### 2. Install **Sound Alarms** on Doors and Windows

Sound alarms are easy-to-install door or window devices that, when activated, sound a loud noise. These sensors are an affordable alternative to pricey home alarm systems. These alarms are extremely helpful in preventing your child from leaving the house unnoticed. You can:

- Buy packets of 2-4 door alarms for \$15-\$20
- Attach bells on a string to your door knobs and windows

**Click on or visit the QR codes below to check out some affordable sound alarm options!**



## Securing the Home Continued

### 3. Install Rubber Corners on Sharp Furniture

For parents with kids who may be particularly energetic, installing soft furniture corner protectors could prevent serious injuries down the line. You can:

- Buy clear or opaque protectors
- Buy corner protectors or long edge protectors

**Click on or visit the QR codes below to check out some affordable corner protector options!**



### 4. Install Furniture Straps

Furniture can be a hazard for children who like to climb and move things around. You can:

- Use rubber pads on the floor to prevent slippage
- Use straps or bolts on the wall to prevent the furniture from falling

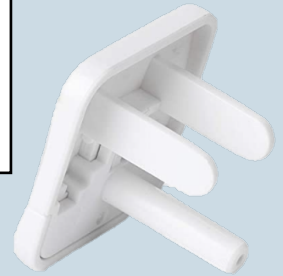
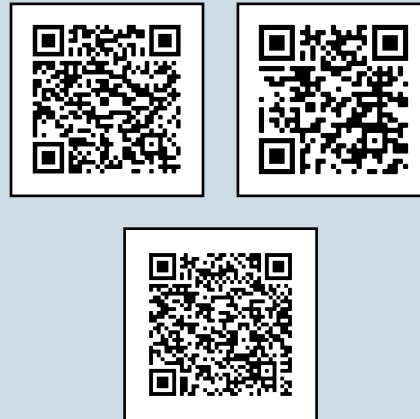
**Click on or visit the QR codes below to check out ways to secure your furniture!**



### 5. Install Outlet Plug Covers around the home

Covering the electrical outlets is a great way to protect young children from any potential electric hazards.

**Click on or visit the QR codes below to check out some affordable outlet plug options!**



### 6. Install Smaller Locks in the Kitchen

Sometimes, your cabinets may contain hazardous chemicals, cooking materials, or other things you want to keep safely enclosed. To secure your kitchen, you can:

- Install locks on cabinets that are invisible or are above your child's reach
- Prevent stove knobs from turning

**Click on or visit the QR codes below to check out some affordable smaller lock options!**





## Securing the Home Continued

### 7. Install [Window Gates or Guards](#)

If your house contains high windows that open and lack protection, window gates or guards are a great way to protect children who may be at risk of falling. To obtain window guards, residents both inside and outside Boston can call the Boston Housing Work Authority Center at 617-988-4357. When purchasing window gates or guards, make sure that:

- If your window is the only method of escape from the room or location, purchase a hinged window gate or guard that allows for escape in case of a fire or emergency
- The guard you are purchasing fits the dimensions of your window or can be adjusted.

Click on or visit the QR codes below to check out some affordable window gate options!

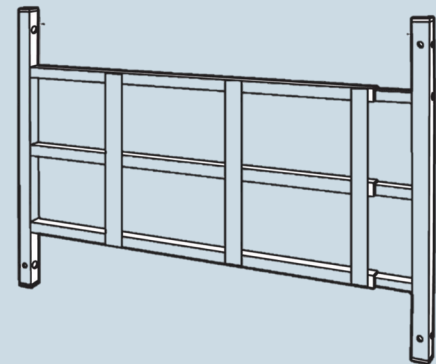
Boston Public Health  
Commission



Amazon



Home Depot



### If you lease an apartment or home:

Under the [Fair Housing Act](#), if you have a disability and need to make reasonable modifications to your living, your landlord is obliged to allow the modifications after notification of the need. Modifications can include window guards, stronger door locks, cabinet locks, and more. However, you might need to cover the cost of the modification in question. **For more detailed information on reasonable modifications and how to request them, click on or visit the QR code.**

### Big Red Safety Box

The National Autism Association's Big Red Safety Box is a free-of-charge toolkit (shipping charges may apply) given to families of individuals on the Autism Spectrum. The kit aims to educate, raise awareness and provide simple tools that may assist them in preventing, and responding to, wandering-related emergencies.

More information on the next page.



## Securing the Home Continued

### Big Red Safety Box Continued

NAA's Big Red Safety Box includes the following resources:

- A "Be REDy Booklet" containing the following educational materials and tools:
  - A caregiver checklist
  - A Family Wandering Emergency Plan
  - A First-Responder profile form
  - A wandering-prevention brochure
  - A sample IEP Letter
  - A Student Profile Form
  - Emotional Identification Cards
  - Wandering Quick Tips
- Two GE Wireless Door/Window Alarms with batteries
- One Road ID Bracelet or Shoe ID tag
- Five Adhesive Stop Sign Visual Prompts for doors and windows
- Two Safety Alert Window Clings for car or home windows
- One Child ID Kit from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children



**Click on or visit the QR code on the right to order a box!**

## Informing Neighbors

Informing your neighbors about the safety needs of your child with autism is a great way to have an extra set of eyes on them in case anything happens. If you are comfortable disclosing your child's diagnosis, you may want to let your neighbors know:

- That your child has autism and/or other disabilities
- How your child communicates/understands language
- What may be comforting to your child
- Any challenging behaviors or triggers
- Your contact information



**Click on or visit the QR code below to see an example letter you could give your neighbor containing this information!**



Example Letter



PDF

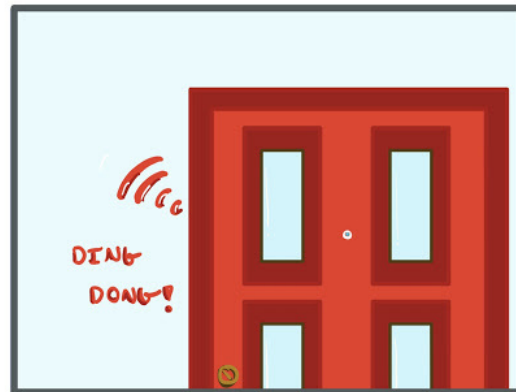
# Visitors: A Social Story

Oftentimes, it can be difficult for children with autism to understand why they shouldn't open the door for strangers. This social story aims to help teach stranger safety, specifically within the home.

This Social Story is about not opening the door to strangers.



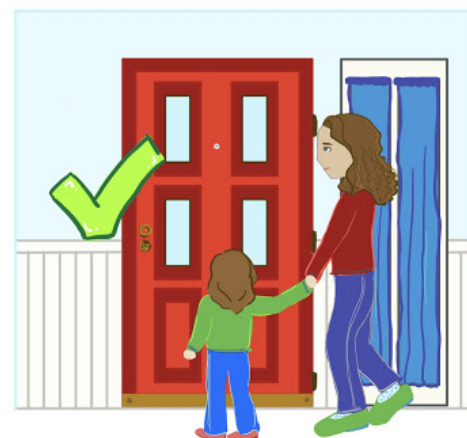
Sometimes, strangers might ring my doorbell or knock my front door when my mom, dad, brothers, or sisters are busy or asleep.



I must never open the door to anyone without asking my parents for permission, even if it sounds like someone I know.



If I hear the doorbell ring or someone knocking at the door, I must go tell my mom or dad immediately. It is very dangerous for me to open the door myself.



# Internet Safety

Securing your child's internet safety, managing their screen time, and setting online boundaries may be challenging. In addition, some children with autism may not know how to navigate potentially dangerous online relationships. On the next page, we will outline some affordable ways to manage screen time and app/ internet restrictions on a variety of devices, to help keep your child safe and healthy. **\*We are not sponsored or related to any of these companies/services.**

## Built-In Apps on Apple and Windows:



Apple

By using the **Parental Restrictions software** built-in to many Apple devices, you are able to:

- Limit your child's screen time
- Limit your child's access to your device's built-in camera
- Limit your child's access to adult websites and ability to delete browsing history
- Limit access to installed apps/ ability to install apps
- Delete apps like Safari, Mail, Messages, and more

Click or visit the QR codes below for instructions on how to turn on parental restrictions for each device!



Computer



Mobile



Microsoft

By using the **Windows Parental Controls** software built-in to many Windows devices, you are able to:

- Limit your child's screen time
- Limit your child's access to adult websites and other websites and ability to delete browsing history
- Can turn on a "Reading View," which eliminates side bars, comments, and advertisements as children browse
- Limit your child's access to installed apps/ ability to install apps
- Generate weekly activity reports of internet searches, app use, and more

Click or visit the QR codes below for instructions on how to turn on parental restrictions for each device!



PC



Xbox

## Internet Safety Continued

### Conversations About Internet Safety

Sitting down and talking to your child about internet safety can be just as important as regulating their devices through parental restrictions, as these conversations can build long-term safety skills and help your child to understand why some parental restrictions might be necessary.

#### Inappropriate Material

- Discuss with your child what content is inappropriate and the dangers and consequences of visiting those sites
- Encourage your child to show you content that they are unsure is appropriate

It is dangerous to send a picture of yourself naked. If someone else sends you inappropriate pictures, please let me know.

#### Predators

- Provide them with a list of information that should not be given out on the internet, for example:
  - Full name
  - Address
  - Birthday
  - School
  - Social Security Number
  - Phone number

#### Cyberbullying

- Explain to your child some ways to identify cyberbullying such as potential name calling, persistent and unwanted contact, receiving inappropriate photos, and more
- Show your child how to block someone on their social media/phone to prevent further cyberbullying
- Encourage your child to talk to an adult if they think they are being cyberbullied

It looks like \_\_\_\_ isn't being a good friend and is calling you mean names. Can I show you how to block them?

### Restrictions on Streaming Services

#### YouTube Kids:

Parents can use this version of YouTube that has curated content for children. YouTube Kids allows parents to set limits on video streaming time, only allow certain channels, and more.

**Click on or visit the QR codes below for further instructions!**



Guide



Site

#### Netflix Kids:

You can create a Netflix Kids account for your child, to ensure they are watching age-appropriate content and set streaming restrictions

**Click on or visit the QR codes below for further instructions!**



Guide



Another Guide

# Safety Outside of the Home

**Disclosure: The Autism Program is not sponsored or related to any of these companies or services.**

**NOTE:** Before paying out of pocket, talk to your child's medical team about funding options. If you are in need of a **letter** on your behalf of your child supporting your need for a **tracker or medical identification**, reach out to the BMC Autism Program at:



**(617) 414-3842**



**autismprogram@bmc.org**

## Tracking Devices

Tracking devices are a great option if you want to keep tabs of where your child is located. It can be lifesaving if your child is prone to wandering. Tracking devices come in different forms such as a bracelet, anklet, watch, or clip-on. Below you'll find different kinds of devices at varying price points. **Click on or scan the QR codes to the for more product information!**

### SafetyNet Tracking Systems

SafetyNet Tracking Systems has services all over Massachusetts and is partnered with public safety agencies to ensure that children with special needs are returned to their caregivers safely and quickly. They offer watches and bracelets for children.

*Price\*: \$120+*



SafetyNet

*\*Financial Assistance Available*

### Project Lifesaver



Project Lifesaver is partnered with police stations in Springfield and East



Project Lifesaver

Massachusetts. To get a tracking device a call must be made to the police station to see what kind of availability they have. A list of police stations that are partnered can be found [here](#). *Price varies.*

### Apple AirTag



Apple AirTags are tiny trackers that provide secure location information via Bluetooth signals detected by nearby



Apple Airtag

Apple devices.

*Price: \$29*

### Amber Alert GPS



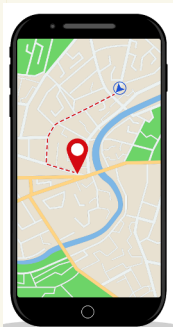
Amber Alert GPS is a more personalized clip-on GPS tracker. It syncs to your phone through an app, sets "safe zones," and calls through the device.



Amber Alert GPS

*Price: \$154.99+*

### Angel Sense



Angel Sense is another personalized clip-on GPS tracker. It is difficult to remove, using a special magnetic key, making it great for children. There is an SOS feature on it and a way to speak to the parent through the device.



Angel Sense

*Price\*: \$33.33+ a month*



## Medical Identification

Medical identification functions to inform others that your child has autism and to provide your contact information should they be found alone. Medical identification can be used in conjunction with tracking devices or by themselves. Be sure to:

- List any **allergies or important medical information**
- Include your **contact information**
- Examples of medical identification products:
  - Medical Alert Foundation (\$19.99+)
  - Alert Me Bands (\$24.95)
  - American Medical ID (\$23.95+)
  - StickyJ Medical (\$15.99+)

Click on underlined product names or visit the QR codes below for purchase!



Medical Alert



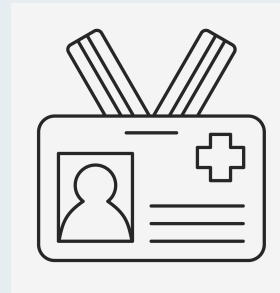
Alert Me Bands



American Medical



StickyJ Medical



## Get in touch with Law Enforcement

If your child tends to wander, having them **registered with the police department** can help them **get located faster** in the case of bolting or wandering.

- The **North Star Program**, offered by the Boston Police Department, and used by other emergency responders, utilizes a comprehensive database of information provided by the parent to ensure the wellbeing of an individual in the case of an emergency.
- If you are a resident **outside of Boston**, it is still highly recommended that you contact your local police department. You can download the free **Meet the Police Toolkit** provided by the National Autism Association below.

Click on or visit the QR codes below for the application and the toolkit!



North Star

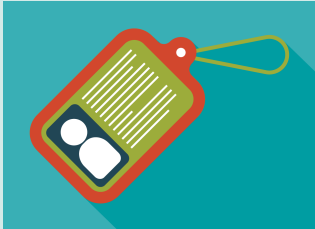


Meet the Police



# Prepare for Your Child's Travel

Before your child goes out, here are some things you may consider having them carry with them:



**Wallet card:** a **free tool** designed to help individuals with autism communicate clearly with law enforcement or First Responders.



**SafetyTat:** a fun, colorful, temporary safety child ID tattoo that can be customized with guardian's mobile phone number. Especially useful if children are going on short-trips/camps



If your child has their own cellphone, make sure the **phone's GPS** is activated before they go out



If going out at night, have your child carry a **small LED flashlight**

## Getting Out of the Car/Parking Lots



- Identify **a place on the car** where your child needs to touch until they are holding the caregiver's hand.
- Massachusetts allows families with children with autism to access a **disability parking plate or placard**. **Click or visit the QR code to access the application for a disabled plate or placard.**



# Safety in the Community

## Who to Ask for Help



- Emergency situations:
  - Find your **parent, guardian or caregiver**
  - Say **"HELP"** out loud, repeat if unnoticed
  - Move to somewhere with more people
  - Approach and speak to a law enforcement officer, fireman, teacher, doctor, or any trusted adult figure

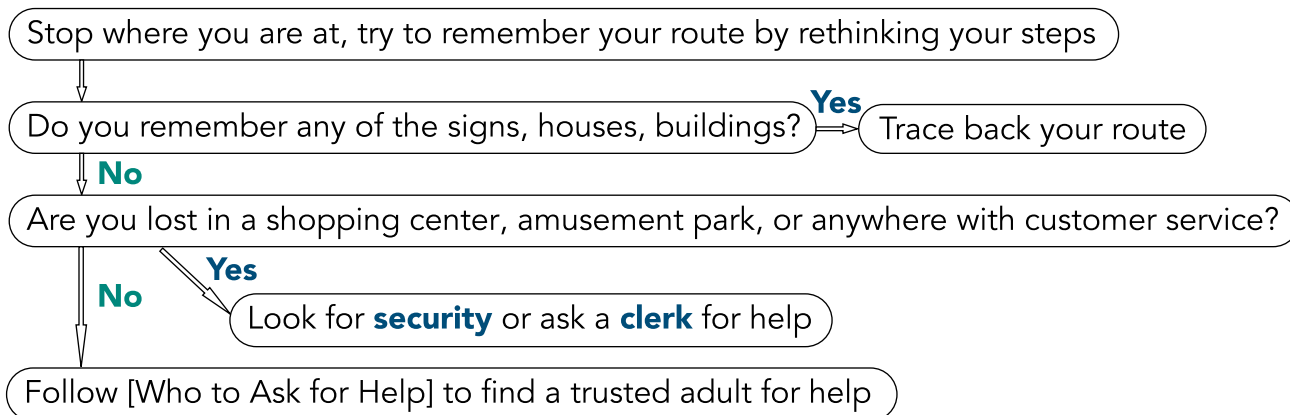


- Non-Emergency situations:
  - Speak to a family member or caregiver
  - Contact a friend



## How to Ask for Help

- Call your **parent, guardian or caregiver** if you have access to a phone
  - Describe your situation calmly
  - Listen to their instructions
    - They may ask you to call 911.
      - Follow the section on "police encounters" next page or more details.
- **When you are lost** without access to a phone or any navigation device



## Safety in the Community Continued

### Interacting with Strangers: A Social Story

1

Being Safe Around Strangers

A blue octopus character named Oswald is smiling and holding a small black hat. Above him, the name "OSWALD" is written in large, red, outlined letters.

2

Hello! My name is Oswald and these are some of my friends.

Oswald the octopus is surrounded by various colorful cartoon friends: a snowman with a black hat, a butterfly, a yellow flower, a small dog, and a chick.


3

We know that you are a very friendly person. It is good to be friendly and nice!

A close-up of Oswald the octopus, smiling broadly with his eyes closed.

4

It is good to be friendly and nice to people you know like your **family, friends, classmates and teachers!**

A cartoon illustration of a person in a yellow uniform holding a red octagonal sign that says "STOP". Above and below the person, the text "I DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS!" is written in large, bold, red letters.

## Interacting with Strangers: A Social Story Continued

5

You should always act extra safe around strangers.



If you do not know if a person is a stranger or not, you can ask Mommy or someone from school, like a teacher! I always ask my friend, Charlie, if I should be extra safe around someone new.

6

Mommy and I are nervous that you are not always being safe.



It is NOT safe to run from Mommy. It is NOT safe to talk to new people unless Mommy says it is OK. It is NOT safe to touch a stranger's body.

7

It IS safe to hold Mommy's hand.  
It IS safe to ask Mommy if you can meet a new person.  
It IS safe to keep hands to yourself.



8

It is important to remember that not everyone is as friendly or as nice as you. It is important to remember that not everyone is your friend or family.



We know this is hard because you are so friendly and nice, but Mommy and I will be SO proud when you are safe!

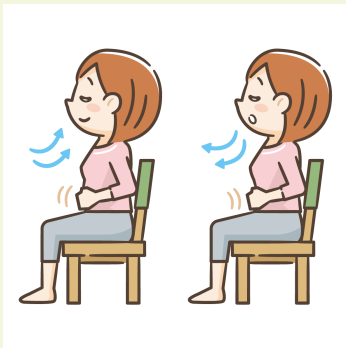


## What to Teach Continued

### Police Encounters

It is important to think about and practice how to talk to law enforcement. Summarized below is the advice mentioned in an article from AutismSpeaks and a link to a video by creators of Wallet Card.

- **Do not** attempt to flee.
- Try to **remain calm** by trying these techniques to reduce stress:
  - **Take deep breaths.** Inhale, hold for 3 seconds, exhale, and hold 3 seconds before inhaling again. Repeat until relaxed.



- **Imagine yourself calm.** Create a mental picture in your mind of how you look when you are calm. Refer to that image in times of stress.
- **Relax your body.** Take all the tension out of each of your muscles from head to toe by doing a mental scan.

- **Avoid** making sudden movements or reaching for items. If you need an item, tell the officer before reaching for the item.
- Consider **getting a hand-out card.** Rehearse bringing out the hand-out card. If you feel comfortable disclosing your diagnosis, be sure to tell the officer that you have ASD. If nonverbal, or if sudden interactions prevent you from speaking, consider using a **medical bracelet** for an officer to read that alerts them to your condition. Check page 9 for product recommendations.
- **Contact** a family member, advocate or friend who can help you through the interview process if you are reporting a crime, or are a victim of a crime, or accused of a crime.
- Carry the **phone number** of a relative, friend, advocacy organization or personal advocate. The more information you provide, the better the officer will be at assisting you.

Click on or visit the QR codes for the original article and the video on Police Encounters.



Article



Video



## Bolting/Wandering Behaviors

Aside from planned travels, another "travel" to prepare for is **wandering behavior**. Common among individuals with autism of all ages, wandering tendencies may put children in dangerous situations. We hope the resources and information we compiled below can protect your child from getting hurt.

1. **Secure** your home (refer to page 1 for more details)
2. Put **stop and think signs** next to any exit in your home (refer to pages 22 & 23 for printouts)
3. Consider a **locating device** & **medical identification** (refer to pages 8 & 9 for more details)
4. Alert **your neighbors** (refer to page 4 for more details)
  - Though introducing your child's diagnosis to your neighbors might not reduce your child's wandering directly, it can help reduce the risks associated with such behavior.
5. Alert **First Responders** (refer to page 9 for more details)
  - Contact the police and fire department to familiarize them with your child and their needs. Provide them with key information such as your child's **identifying features**. Informational handouts should include all pertinent information and be copied and carried with guardians and caregivers at all times.
6. How to stop your child from **bolting and/or wandering**
  - Try to determine any **triggers, reasons, or plans** to why your child wanders
    - Examples include: desire to go near a preferred location; escaping loud noises at a certain time of the day that make staying at home overwhelming
7. What to do **if your child is missing**:
  - **Report wandering emergencies to law enforcement immediately by calling 911**

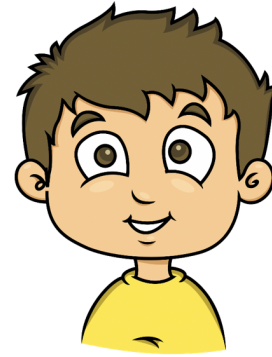


# Bolting Behavior Prevention: A Social Story

1 I SHOULD NOT RUN AWAY!



2



Hi! My name is Leo.  
I like to watch TV, read books,  
and play outside!

3



I also like to run really fast.

4



Running really fast is a good way to  
release energy! It also keeps me healthy.  
When I run I like to drink water after!

5



Sometimes when we are at the store, I  
want to see something closer so I run  
really fast away from Mommy or Daddy.

6



When I run away from Mommy or Daddy, it is a  
big surprise to them! It can make them very  
nervous. Mommy and Daddy will say "STOP!". If I  
hear the word "STOP", I should stop my body and  
turn towards Mommy or Daddy.



## Bolting Behavior Prevention: A Social Story Continued

7



**Instead of running away, I can squeeze Mommy or Daddy's hand and hold on tight. If I want to see something closer, I can ask them first.**

8



**If I hold Mommy or Daddy's hand, and tell them before running away, then they will know that I am safe and happy! It is important to be safe and stay close to Mommy and Daddy.**

9



**When I'm at home, I like to wake up early. If I wake up early and everyone is sleeping, I need to remember to stay inside. I can play in my room and play with my toys.**

10



**Sometimes I also like to unlock the door. this is unsafe! Mommy and Daddy are the best at using the lock! If I want the door to be unlocked, I can ask for help.**

11




















**When I don't touch the lock, Mommy and Daddy will know that I am safe. That makes Mommy and Daddy very happy!**

12



**I can be a big boy by holding Mommy and Daddy's hands and staying away from the door lock. They are so proud of me!**

## Bolting/Wandering Behaviors Continued

 DOs	 DON'Ts
 Tell your child <b>exactly</b> what to do	 Only tell your child what they are <b>doing wrong</b>
 "Please hold my hand and walk next to me" 	 "STOP running around!! DON'T run away by yourself" 
 <b>Label</b> the behavior you want your child to exhibit and provide <b>behavior-specific praise</b>	 <b>Ignore improvements</b> , regardless of how big or small they are
 "You are doing such a great job holding my hand while you walk!"	 "Don't stand on that high chair"
 <b>Reward</b> them in the moment	 Provide <b>attention</b> for engaging in challenging or <b>unwanted behaviors*</b>
 "Here is your favorite snack/activity/item because you kept your body safe on the walk home"	 "How many times do I have to tell you? Why aren't you listening? Why can't you remember this?" 

\* Intervene if safety is a concern

## Water Safety



In the past 20 years, deaths of individuals with autism increased by 700 percent. In a 2017 study by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, researchers identified **drowning** to be among the top three causes of **injury mortality** in children with autism. Teaching your child about water safety and how to swim is an important aspect of ensuring their safety. Follow the six pointers on the next page to ensure a safe and fun time.

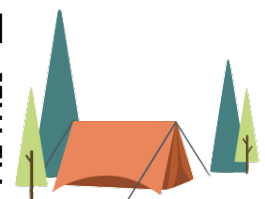
**Click on or scan the QR codes to check out the full research study and the BMC 2021 Summer Guide!**



Research



Summer Guide



## Water Safety Continued

1. **Expose** your child to **SUPERVISED water play** as frequently as possible
  - The more time your child spends in the water, the more comfortable and safe they will be.
2. **Be patient** with your child when they are learning to swim
  - Every child's path to water comfort is different. **Do not push your child to rush their learning process** by swimming in the deep end or jumping off the diving board until he or she feels ready and can demonstrate being safe.
3. **Proactively watch** your child in the water
  - Keep an eye out **at all times!**
  - Do not assume that because your child has mastered swimming that they can be left unsupervised
  - In group settings, **do not assume other adults** in the area are watching your child
4. **Watch** out for **dangerous situations**
  - Children with ASD often lack awareness of the dangers around them, putting them at a higher risk than other children in the water.
  - Remember to look out for:
    - slippery surfaces
    - water that is too cold
    - unexpected deep water
5. **Watch** out for **wandering behaviors**
  - Try to understand why your child might desire to wander and alert them of the risks associated

6. Ensure your child is wearing **water safety gear and equipment**



- Insist that your child wears a life-jacket or floatie until they have mastered swimming and water safety skills
- They **still need to be carefully supervised** even when equipped

## Swimming Lessons

Swimming lessons for children with special needs are provided by many organizations

- Local YMCA
  - "Water Wise" Swim Lesson Program
  - Adaptive and Inclusion Activities
  - ✉ [Jerry Justice - justicej@northshoreymca.org](mailto:justicej@northshoreymca.org)
- Swim Angelfish
  - Specializes in adaptive swim lessons for people with special needs
- Autism Spectrum Disorder Foundation
  - Provides scholarship money to parents who cannot afford swim lessons across the U.S.
  - Scholarship Application period:
    - Annually: May 1st-21st.
    - Register by emailing [myasdf@yahoo.com](mailto:myasdf@yahoo.com) during the date range
  - Scholarship
    - Provides **direct financial assistance** for programs you find in your area.



YMCA



Swim Angelfish



ASD Foundation

# Recognizing and Preventing Abuse and Sexual Abuse

Ensuring the safety of our loved ones also includes educating our children and ourselves on how to detect and prevent violence, neglect, and sexual abuse. Numerous studies have shown empirical evidence that children with developmental disabilities are at a much higher risk of abuse. To keep our loved ones safe, we are providing the definition of abuse, risk factors, advice on what we can do to reduce risks, and numbers to call for help and guidance.

## Q A Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What does **physical abuse and neglect** look like?

**Physical abuse** includes, but is not limited to, shaking, beating, biting, kicking, punching and burning which is not accidental.

**Neglect** refers to situations in which an individual is not provided with adequate guardianship, food, clothing, shelter, education, or medical care, whether done intentionally or unintentionally.

### 2. What are **signs** that my loved one might be the victim of abuse?

More apparent signs may include **unexplained bruises, pain or weight loss**. Additionally, **behavior changes**, including avoidance of certain people or places, may indicate victimization.

### 3. If my loved one is **non-verbal**, are there certain things I should look for?

Some behavioral changes to keep an eye out for are **social withdrawal, avoidance of particular places or people, behavioral outbursts** when presented with particular places or people, or **developmental regression**.

### 4. If I suspect my loved one is a **victim of abuse** what should I do?

**Contact law enforcement immediately.** It is appropriate to call 911 to report abuse. If the abuse happens within an agency setting, contact the State regulatory agency which provides oversight to the organization. If your loved one has a **Service Coordinator**, contact him or her regarding follow up on the report and to ensure that safeguards are immediately put in place.

### 5. What can individuals with autism do to **keep themselves safe**?

**Empower** individuals with autism to be **leaders** and **advocate for themselves in a socially appropriate way**.

- Talk to your loved ones openly and honestly about **personal safety, boundaries, saying no, and healthy and unhealthy touch**.
- Give your child opportunities to role play and/or talk about potentially dangerous situations and practice how they might respond to these.
- Teach your child very concrete and specific skills on **HOW and WHO to alert for help and WHAT to do** if they suspect they are being abused (refer to page 11 for more details)
- The more individuals with autism know about abuse and “red flags” the better. Children with autism should be able to identify at least two trusted adults they can report abuse to or go to for help.

## Recognizing and Preventing Abuse and Sexual Abuse Continued

### 6. Is it necessary to talk to my child about sexuality?

While this can be a tough topic to discuss, we urge you to address the dangers of sexual abuse in ways that are comfortable for the child. Evidence based sexuality education is very important for individuals with autism and should be taught in a clear and concise way. It is important to discuss the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and to distinguish between the various types of healthy relationships. Though the task may seem overwhelming, starting as **EARLY** as possible and being **DIRECT** as possible is best.

### 7. How should I provide sexuality education?

Comprehensive sexuality education consists of instruction in three distinct content areas:

- **Basic facts and personal safety**
- **Individual values**
- **Social competence**

Focusing on basic safety skills should be considered both necessary and appropriate for people on the autism spectrum. These skills include:

- Understanding **personal privacy** and who can and who cannot help you in the bathroom or with personal care skills
- Understanding the concept of personal space for both self and others
- Using **adult terminology** (e.g., penis instead of peepee)
- The restriction of nudity to bathroom or bedroom
- Closing and **locking bathroom** or stall **doors**
- Using public restrooms independently
- Body part identification



#### GETTING HELP

If a child discloses abuse:

Listen fully & never blame the child

Call Childhelp®

National Child Abuse Hotline at

**1.800.4.A.CHILD (1.800.422.4453)**

## How to Prevent Sexual Abuse

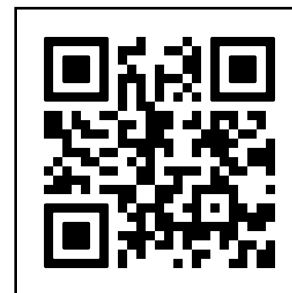
- Teach children **accurate names of private body parts**.
- Avoid focusing exclusively on "stranger danger."
  - Keep in mind that **most children are abused by someone they know and trust**.
- Teach children about body safety and the difference between "okay" and "not okay" touches. Let children know that they have the right to make decisions about their bodies.
- **Empower them to say "no"** when they do not want to be touched, even in non-sexual ways (e.g., politely refusing hugs) and to say "no" to touching others.
- Make sure children know that **adults and older children should never ask for help with their private body parts** (e.g., bathing or going to the bathroom).
- Teach children to **take care of their own private parts** (i.e., bathing, wiping after bathroom use) so they don't have to rely on adults or older children for help.
- Educate children about the **difference between good secrets** (ie. a short term secret for a surprise) and **bad secrets** (those where a child asked to never share).
- Trust your instincts! **If you feel uneasy about leaving a child with someone, don't do it.** If you're concerned about possible sexual abuse, ask questions.



# Printouts

Below are some multipurpose signs and cards that can be printed out and used as safety prompts.

Click on or scan the QR codes to print out the signs!



## Stop, Think, Ask Signs



**STOP WHERE  
YOU ARE**



**THINK ABOUT WHAT  
YOU ARE DOING**



**ASK PERMISSION  
TO LEAVE**



**STOP WHERE  
YOU ARE**



**THINK ABOUT WHAT  
YOU ARE DOING**




**ASK PERMISSION  
TO LEAVE**

## Stop Signs



## I Have Autism Cards

**I HAVE AUTISM** 


Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I have a condition that impairs my ability to communicate and understand social cues.

Sometimes, I \_\_\_\_\_.

Please do not panic when you see me like this, perhaps I am just a little stressed.

You can treat me with \_\_\_\_\_ to help calm me down.

**I HAVE AUTISM** 


Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I have a condition that impairs my ability to communicate and understand social cues.

Sometimes, I \_\_\_\_\_.

Please do not panic when you see me like this, perhaps I am just a little stressed.

You can treat me with \_\_\_\_\_ to help calm me down.

**I HAVE AUTISM** 

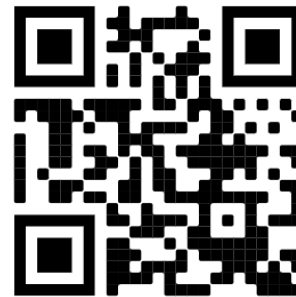
Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I have a condition that impairs my ability to communicate and understand social cues.

Sometimes, I \_\_\_\_\_.

Please do not panic when you see me like this, perhaps I am just a little stressed.

You can treat me with \_\_\_\_\_ to help calm me down.



I Have Autism Card

## Pathfinders For Autism Free Downloadable Cards

*My child's behavior may be puzzling to you...*



**My child has Autism Spectrum Disorder. We are doing the best we can. Thank you for your understanding.**

**For more information about Autism visit [www.pathfindersforautism.org](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org)**

Autism is a neurological difference that impacts communication, sensory processing, social interactions, and behavior. Autism is not a discipline issue. My child experiences the world differently than you and I do and may be reacting to pain, sensory overload, frustration with communicating, or a sense of panic.

**For more information on Autism Spectrum Disorder, Contact Pathfinders for Autism 443-330-5341 [www.pathfindersforautism.org](http://www.pathfindersforautism.org)**





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## The Autism Program

AT BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER

This Safety Resource Guide was developed by The Autism Program at BMC and 2021/2022 Interns Valeria Robayo, Veronica Perdomo, Cindy Luo, Kylie Graves, Rachel Park and Riley Contee in collaboration with Officer Michelle Maffeo, Boston Police Department.