



# A Day in the Life Series.

## Medical Passport Stories

A medical passport can be an incredibly useful document for autistic people to have. This short form is something you can bring with you, as a physical or digital copy, when you need medical help. Communicating clearly about your needs, your medical worries, or your pain can be really hard, especially in a chaotic environment like a hospital. You might have to interact with lots and lots of new people in your journey through such a place. A medical passport can make this much easier.

It can be really helpful to have three versions of a medical passport. One you can keep on you at all times. One can be kept by a supporting family member or friend. The last copy can be handed over to the medical practitioners you meet on your hospital, clinic or GP's surgery visit. Each can have information specifically included for the intended person.

Autism Unlimited (in partnership with Communities Against Cancer) has produced a number of resources to help you think about your own medical passport. This particular handout includes two stories that show the benefits of having a medical passport, and gives you some ideas about how taking one to a hospital might help you. The story imagines you are going to the hospital for a routine visit for something like a surgery, so you have some time to prepare, and you will have to stay overnight.

The story describes one way to use medical passports, but your passport might include very different information, and you might only create one version. The best way to use a medical passport is the way that best helps you!



## A Negative Experience (Without a Medical Passport)

### Before the Visit

Preparing for your visit is very stressful. You're not sure what you need to do to get ready, and you're not sure what you need to bring, especially since you will have to stay overnight. It's difficult to imagine what the visit is going to be like, and you're worried that you're going to forget something that you need to bring. It's really hard to maintain a good energy level and you haven't even got to the hospital yet.

### During the Visit

You go to the hospital with your supporter, a family member or a trusted friend. They know that you are autistic and struggle with situations like this, but they don't have any specific instructions regarding the help you need, and you're too stressed out to provide any. You have to answer lots and lots of questions from lots of different medics, and you're not sure you understand all the questions they've asked. Subsequently, you're not clear what exactly is going to happen during the procedure and you feel disempowered.

### After the Visit

You're worried that you might have left some of your possessions at the hospital. Although it seems everything went well, you're not sure you communicated all the things you need to. Perhaps you're in a lot of pain, but couldn't clearly explain this to your medical practitioners. Now you're back at home, you're still too overwhelmed to know what to do to calm down, and it might take you several days to feel normal, on top of the fact that you need to heal after your procedure.





## A Positive Experience (With a Medical Passport)

### Before the Visit

The medical passport contains information about how to charge up your energy levels. (For a good way to think about energy levels, Autism Unlimited has a number of handouts exploring the 'Frog System'.) You've taken steps to feel calm and collected before the appointment. You know what you need to bring, because this information is also included on your personal copy of your medical passport. You still feel anxious, but everything is under control, more or less, and you're well prepared.

### During the Visit

Your supporter, armed with their copy of your medical passport, is completely able and ready to provide you with all the help you might need. They can even answer some of the medical practitioners' questions on your behalf, since they have all the necessary information on the medical passport. Equally, all the medics know that you are autistic and understand that you might struggle to understand or answer their questions, or might have particular sensory needs. It doesn't just explain the barriers you need help overcoming, but the little things that they can do to help you feel empowered and in control of your treatment. Your own copy of the passport has information you can use to feel calmer in this stressful environment.

### After the Visit

It was easier to communicate that you were in pain after your procedure, and you have been given pain relief by the medics. Your passport tells you the things you brought with you, and you can check that you have them all before you leave. It also includes some routines and tips you can use to re-energise yourself and help feel calm and collected again. Having more energy is definitely going to make getting better much easier!