



PYRAMID
APPROACH TO EDUCATION®

For more information about treating patients with communication differences, Picture Exchange Communication System® (PECS®), or the Pyramid Approach to Education® please contact Pyramid at pyramidus@pecs.com.

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Treating Patients with Communication Differences

Practical tips for a successful medical examination

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HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY?

VISUAL AIDS

Many people with developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), or communication challenges may have difficulties in understanding verbal information. The use of visual supports can help them organize, understand, and retain information provided to them.



SENSORY HYPERSENSITIVITY



Many people show extreme sensitivity to various sensory stimuli, such as touch, sound, or light. The discomfort generated by this sensitivity can cause them anxiety and/ or avoidance behaviors. Turning down the lights or having noise reduction headphones can be used to help reduce stimuli.

REINFORCEMENT

An activity, object, item, and/or praise can be used to get a certain response associated with a positive consequence. It may be easier to motivate patients to complete the examination if they know what reward they can obtain at the end of the visit.



ALWAYS ASK PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS

While the recommendations in this document can be useful tools, the people who know patients best are their immediate family and caretakers. They will guide you and offer the best information to assist in making the examination a success.



HOW ARE VISUAL AIDS USED?

1

STRUCTURE THE SEQUENCE YOU WILL COMPLETE

Arrange a visual list of pictures showing what activity or test will occur during the visit. These sequences may vary depending on the patient and the examination.

2

SHOW AND/OR GIVE THE SEQUENCE TO THE PATIENT AND CARETAKER

The visual list can facilitate the understanding of each activity or test that will be completed during the examination.

3

POINT TO THE FIRST STEP IN THE SEQUENCE, WHEN THAT IS COMPLETED REMOVE IT AND POINT TO THE NEXT STEP

Pointing and removing the picture, indicates what step is current and when it's completed. For some patients you can verbalize in one or two words, for other patients too many spoken words can contribute to hypersensitivity.



Attached you will find Pics for PECS® pictures you can use to create a visual sequence for your patient.



4

IF THE PATIENT APPEARS ANXIOUS OR NERVOUS, SET A TIMER TO INDICATE HOW LONG THIS STEP WILL TAKE

The timer is another visual aid that can assist the patient to understand how long the activity or test will last.

5

WHEN THE TIMER ENDS, POINT TO THE NEXT STEP AND REPEAT THE PROCESS AGAIN UNTIL THE SEQUENCE IS FINISHED

The timer can be used for each step or it can be used for the entire sequence. If the timer finishes prior to the examination, point to the current step and restart the timer.

6

EXAMPLE OF SEQUENCE

This example shows the steps during an examination with a reinforcer (reward) at the end.



