

Environmental Adaptations

The emergency department is a fast-paced, loud, and overstimulating environment. This will be overwhelming for most of us—especially so for people with DD. How can your environment be adapted to better support people with disabilities?

- Quiet space: Can the patient (and caregivers) be offered a quiet/adapted space? In some settings, there may be a space already dedicated for such a purpose, but if not, the following are considerations:
 - An isolation or infection control room (remembering you will be using this just temporarily)
 - A mental health interviewing room
 - A corner room
 - If no rooms are available, a bed that is further from hallways or nursing station may provide a slight reduction in stimuli.
- Turn off any non-essential monitoring equipment
- Fluorescent lighting can be distracting or irritating. Is it possible to dim the lights in the patient's area? Or turn off? If not, a pair of sunglasses may be beneficial.
- Limit the number of different team members going in and out of the patient's space. Consistency is always best if this is possible.
- Encourage caregivers to remain present for testing and imaging. Ask them about what has helped (or not helped) in the past.
- Sit at eye level.
- Use a show-tell-do approach. Show the patient the instrument or procedure you will use, allowing them to touch/explore it; describe the steps involved, and what can be expected; then proceed.
- Consider a Sensory Box that is offered to patients. This can include very simple items that may go a long way in soothing, calming or distracting a patient while they are waiting, and during care/assessment:
 - Squishy balls
 - Fidgets
 - Noise reducing headphones
 - Sunglasses
 - Brush
 - Weighted lap pad/blanket
- Have coloring books, playing cards on hand.