

# Experiences of the Autistic community accessing an ambulance



## Introduction

Amaze and Ambulance Victoria asked Autistic people and parent/carers about their experiences when needing an ambulance. Many shared how the sensory environment of an ambulance and communication barriers can impact their experience.

## What we heard from the Autistic community...



### NOISES

The noise of sirens, medical and ambulance equipment adds to sensory overwhelm.



### SMELLS

The smell in an ambulance is like a GP clinic and hospital and some medications have strong odours.



### TASTE

It's helpful to know medications can have an unpleasant taste.



### TOUCH

Assessment and treatment may require touch with a gloved hands, the use of equipment can feel firm, cold, sticky on the skin. The texture of blankets and positioning on the stretcher might feel uncomfortable.



### LIGHTS

Paramedics can need bright lights to work safely, they may need to shine a light in your eyes and the flashing lights of the ambulance might be challenging.



### BODY AWARENESS

Paramedics will ask lots of questions to understand how to help. This can be more challenging when trying to describe your experience and expression of symptoms and pain without effective communication tools and strategies.



### MOVEMENT

You must wear a seatbelt when traveling in the ambulance which can restrict your movement.



### BALANCE AND MOTION

You will likely sit or lie backwards when travelling in the ambulance which can feel strange and may contribute to motion sickness.

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**Clear, direct information is crucial...minimising sensory impacts, treating distress with patience and allowing support can significantly improve the situation.**

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## What you can do

Share with paramedics what adjustments would help you have a positive experience.

### Ask if you can take your:

- Fidget or sensory calming items
- Assistance animal and support equipment
- Phone, tablet and communication tools
- Sensory tools like ear defenders, hats or sunglasses.

## What paramedics can do

- If safe, they can arrive without lights and sirens
- Turn off or down unnecessary sounds from medical equipment and lights
- Support your communication preferences by using the Emergency Healthcare Communication Book or your communication tool
- Explore with you different ways to explain and express pain or symptoms
- Explain and/or show what treatments and medication feels and tastes like
- Offer distractions techniques

### To access translated and Easy English resources:

- How to get help in a health emergency
- What happens when an ambulance comes to help you

Visit: [www.ambulance.vic.gov.au](http://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au)