

Support for parents, carers and services on the COVID-19 outbreak

The following document has been compiled by the Autism Support Team at Scottish Autism to ensure the easy access to relevant information and resources to support those supporting autistic people during the COVID-19 outbreak.

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1. Supporting autistic people to understand Coronavirus

Associated documents:

[Carol Gray: Understanding Coronavirus Social Story.](#)

[Dr. Siobhan-Timmons: Understanding Coronavirus Social Story.](#)

[AST – What is Coronavirus? Story.](#)

2. Supporting autistic people to wash their hands

Associated documents:

Video Links document

How to Slow Down a Youtube Video document

3. Supporting autistic people to manage coughing and sneezing

Associated documents:

[AST – What do I do if I Sneeze or Cough? Story.](#)

[AST – If I Sneeze or Cough \(Sign\).](#)

4. Supporting autistic people to understand school and activity closures

Associated documents:

[AST – Learning at home story.](#)

[AST – Learning at school story.](#)

[AST – Groups and activities outside of home story.](#)

Supporting autistic people to understand Coronavirus

Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is defined by the world health organisation as:

“a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified in humans.”

News headlines, information, and conversation about Coronavirus has become widespread throughout early 2020 in Scotland, and many autistic people will be looking to find information that is easily accessible to them and communicated in a way that supports their understanding. Some information on Coronavirus may cause unnecessary stress and anxiety to some autistic people. For example, headlines on death rates or pseudoscientific information on spread, cures, or protection methods. Some new rules and protocols (e.g. social distancing, hand washing procedures) may be difficult for some people to adapt to, and they may have been informed that the “spread of Coronavirus” is the reason for these changes happening. For some people, having a factual understanding about the outbreak and what this means may be important.

The following guidance page by Peter Vermuelen provides a comprehensive advice guide to those supporting autistic people throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. The webpage can be found [here](#).

You can also find information by SVCO on Coronavirus Community Assistance Directory on their website [here](#).

Below is some information that may be suitable for some autistic people in supporting their understanding of coronavirus.

Associated documents:

[AST – What is coronavirus? Story](#)

[Carol Gray – What is Coronavirus Social Story](#)

[Dr. Siobhan-Timmons: Understanding](#)

[Coronavirus Social Story](#)

Supporting autistic people to wash their hands

The World Health Organisation recommends regular and thorough hand-washing as a preventative measure to the contraction and spread of coronavirus. Adhering to new guidelines on hand washing may be difficult for some autistic people for the following reasons:

1. If it no longer ties into their routine (i.e after using the bathroom, before meals).
2. Due to sensory issues with the feeling or smell of soap
3. Due to sensory issues with the temperature of water
4. Due to the confusion of the process being lengthened (to 20 seconds if this was not done previously).
5. The steps involved in proper hand washing technique becoming confusing, resulting in the individual becoming stressed and wishing to avoid the process.

Regular hand washing has been suggested by the NHS as an appropriate measure to reduce the spread of infections, including the recent COVID-19 outbreak. Adhering to the new guidelines is a process which may take some time for people to become comfortable with.

1. Use of fragrance-free hand soap

These are accessible widely online or in stores. Some people may find certain fragrances difficult and therefore washing their hands regularly may be a challenge. You may need to try different types or brands of soap to find one they are comfortable with.

2. Different soap types

Soap can come in the form of a physical block or liquid solution, which may be more comfortable for an individual to use.

3. Water temperature adjustments

The NHS currently does not state that water must be at a certain temperature. You can find a water temperature level that is comfortable for that person. [Stay up to date with current recommendations.](#)

4. Hand-washing stories

Stories can be a useful way of explaining change or what is expected in certain situations. The story should be bespoke to the person's communications style and needs. Some pre-written stories can help as a starting point and are available with this pack.

5. Timers

Some people may prefer a physical timer (such as a sand timer) to inform them of when they must stop washing their hands. Some people may prefer an audio timer, or a song which lasts 20 seconds or more.

6. Copying

Some people may be better able to follow the hand washing instructions by watching another individual complete the steps in front of them.

7. Video

Some people may prefer to watch a video on proper hand washing technique whilst conducting the activity. Ensure the device stays a safe distance away from water, using water-proof coverings if available.

8. Visual support

Visual aid can be used to incorporate hand-washing into a routine, such as a visual strip to increase the frequency of washing hands. Visual images of the step-by-step process can be attached to a wall beside a bathroom in the home, or carried around if out and about. Be mindful about the amount of information is that is present to an individual at one time.

Youtube videos to support hand washing

We have added a selection of videos which can be used on a mobile or tablet device to show an individual while hand washing. This could be a useful visual cue for some. We understand that some video speeds may be too fast for an individual to follow. We have added a guidance on how to slow down a Youtube Video.

NHS Hand washing procedure

This video involves a close-up of the hand washing procedure. It plays the “Happy Birthday” theme tune in the back. You may wish to mute this if appropriate for the person you are supporting.

[Click the image opposite to view the video.](#)



NHS Hand washing Procedure (Kids)

This video involves showing the video with a memorable song. It also has sing-along-words too. This may be over-stimulating for some people, and therefore the adult video (above) may be more appropriate for some people.

[Click the image opposite to view the video.](#)



Mount Sinai Health – Hand washing procedure

This video shows only animated images and words, with no music and minimal movement. This may be appropriate for people who can follow the steps by being prompted by a picture, and may be over stimulated by too much movement in a video.

[Click the image opposite to view the video.](#)



NHS Gangnam Style Video

This video uses a light-natured approach to teach proper handwashing technique using the Gangnam Style song and dance. This may suit people with an interest in music and who may enjoy light-natured comedy.

[Click the image opposite to view the video.](#)



The Hand Washing Rap

This is another light-natured video which supports understanding the process along to lyrics of MC Hammer – Can't Touch This

[Click the image opposite to view the video.](#)



Babyshark song and dance

Babyshark is a popular children's song from South Korea which has grown massively in popularity in western countries. Many children know the song and are attracted to the repetition involved. The lyrics can be replicated as followed and include dance moves.



[Click the image opposite to view the video.](#)

The following example from Gelliswick Primary School can help support you with lyrics:

Make them wet, doo
doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Make them wet!

Make them soapy,
doo doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Make them soapy!
Rub the back, doo doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Rub the back
Rub the front, doo doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Rub the front!

Wash your nails,
doo doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Wash your nails!
Rub your thumbs, doo doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Rub your thumbs!
Fingertips, doo doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Fingertips!

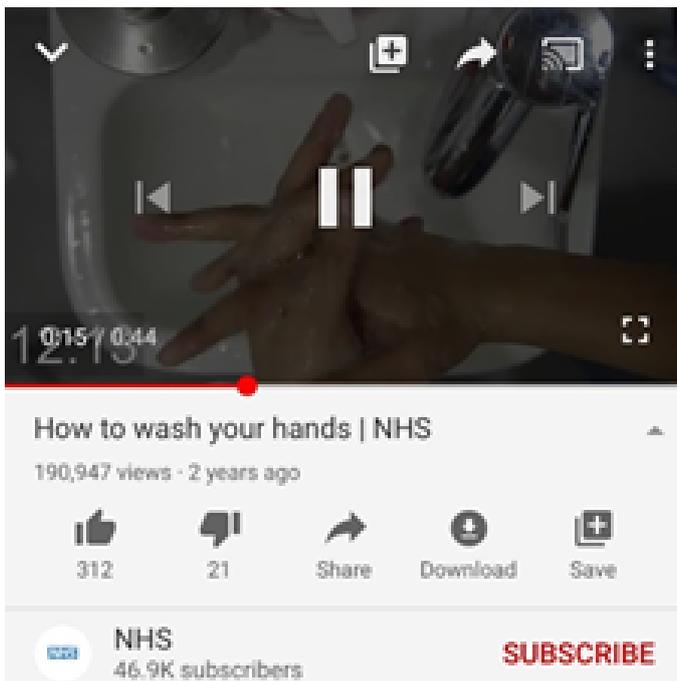
Rinse and dry, doo doo doo
doo doo doo (x3)
Rinse and dry!
Nice and clean, doo doo doo doo doo doo (x3)
Nice and clean!

How to Slow Down a Video on Youtube Mobile

You may wish to slow down a video on Youtube Mobile App to help an individual to follow it.

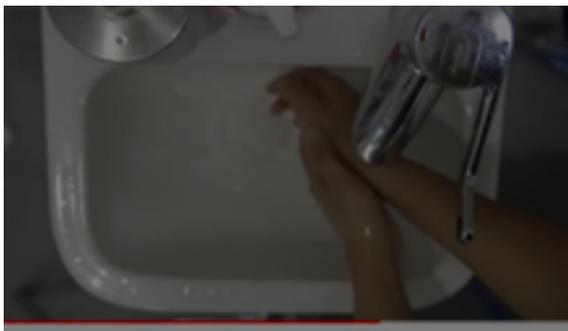
Please see the below guide.

1. Open the video you would like to you show.

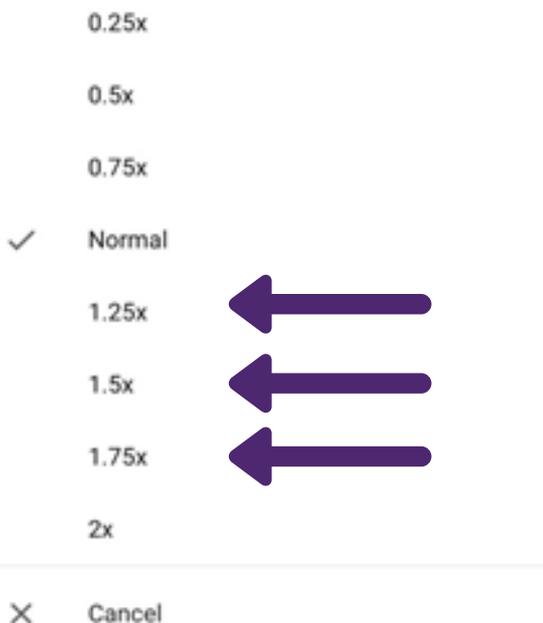


2. Press on the video screen until a black, transparent screen overwrites the video like the adjacent picture. You will notice a pause/play button come up in the middle, and all other symbols. Press on the three dots in the top right hand corner. We have placed a purple arrow beside them in the adjacent picture.

3. You will see the a white menu appear. Press the option “Playback Speed”. We have added a purple arrow showing you where this is.



4. Usually, “Normal” will be selected. This is indicated by a black check mark being beside it. Press speeds 0.25x or 0.5x or 0.75x to slow the video down. All other options will speed the video up.



Visual Symbols which can be used to support hand washing

Some people may already have visual strips which can be used to support them to plan their day, and to know what is happening next. Hand-washing symbols can be used either to indicate where hand washing should happen throughout the day. Alternatively, a visual strip can be used to indicate the different steps involved in hand washing.

Our [Right Click programme](#) contains a module which can support you as a parent to understand the use of visual symbols, and the role they can play in supporting people to understand the steps in a sequence or routine.

Some people choose to create their own visual symbols using BoardMaker. However, you can also use images taken from Google Images.

Hand Washing



Use soap



Palm to palm



Back to hands



Fingers interlaced



Base of thumbs



Fingernails



Wrists



Rinse Hands



Dry Hands

Managing coughing and sneezing

The NHS recommends that to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, people should:

1. Use a tissue to cover their nose and mouth
2. Bin the tissue
3. Wash their hands using the correct hand washing procedure

This is communicated to the public through the Catch It, Bin It, Kill it campaign. Some people may struggle to understand the campaign due to:

1. No indication of what “It” refers to
2. The language used not corresponding to its exact meaning (i.e. Kill It referring to “wash hands”).

It may be necessary in the case to modify the wording of this campaign to more specific language to support people to understand what it means. We have attached a modified version of the campaign poster to help clarify the campaign wording. Some people may not be able to temporarily hold a sneeze or cough in order to find a tissue. It is therefore important to ensure that people have easy access to tissues at all times.

Some people may not be able to follow the process. In this case, the safest place to sneeze is into the crook of your elbow ([source](#)).

There are associated documents which can help you support a person to understand how to follow this process.

Associated documents:

[AST – “What do I do if I sneeze or cough?” story.](#)

[AST – I will try to sneeze in my elbow story.](#)

Find these documents on our [Information Resources page](#)

Supporting autistic people to understand school and activity closures

Routine and structure is very important to many autistic people, and any breaks in this can cause anxiety and distress. Some schools, and many clubs and activities may be closed during the outbreak.

1. Replace routine

Some people may be able to adapt to a new routine and structure and if they have the right tools to support them. Routine can be replaced with indoor learning, games, movies, baking or creative work. You may wish to use a visual strip or a calendar to replace old activities with new ones.

2. Communicate changes

Some people may need changes communicated to them several times in order to support their understanding. This could be done through Social Stories, consistent scripts, or conversation.

3. Link with activities and schools and replicate

Prior to closure, many schools and activity centres will be happy to help inform you of what activities they complete previously. You can replicate many of these in the home environment to help reduce the extent of change.

4. Replace learning activities

The Autism Support Team are compiling an education resource pack to support families with replacing learning activities.

Associated Documents:

[AST – Learning at home story.](#)

[AST – Learning at school story.](#)

Find these documents on our [Information Resources page](#)