



# COMMON SENSORY TRIGGERS

Every autistic person is different, but many autistic people find similar sensory input overwhelming or distressing. If your child is clearly upset or frustrated and can't tell you why, here are some things to check:

- 1 Lighting levels and visual stimulation - bright light can be painful, and can make it hard to see, while lots of bright colours, patterns, or different objects to visually process can be painful and overwhelming. Turning all the lights off, wearing sunglasses, or taking a break from visually busy environments can help
- 2 Noise levels - background noise isn't in the background for many autistic people. Noise-cancelling headphones or a quiet space in your home can be really helpful
- 3 Smells - many cleaning products and perfumes/deodorants smell unpleasantly chemical to some autistic people. Try switching to odour-neutral products, or opening all the windows after cleaning
- 4 Social exhaustion - social interaction can be overwhelming for autistic people, especially if it involves meeting new people. Your child may need to be alone for a while, without having anything asked of them
- 5 Stillness - if your child has had to stay still or focus on one thing for a while they may need to move around or make noise. Try encouraging them to run around outside (or running around with them if they're younger), or encouraging them to flap their hands or do a dance
- 6 Surprises or changes in routine - many autistic people find anything unpredictable very upsetting and anxiety-inducing. If there have been a few changes or surprises in your child's day, they may need reassurance that things will go back to normal tomorrow, or a detailed discussion about what to expect in the future

For more information, please visit:  
[autismnz.org.nz/understanding-autism/](https://autismnz.org.nz/understanding-autism/)

This resource was written by an autistic author.