

TIPS FOR FAMILIES WITH AUTISTIC YOUTH GOING TO ST-HUBERT

Going out to eat at restaurants is an important part of most people's lives. For customers on the autism spectrum and for families with autistic children, this isn't always easy. Eating out at a restaurant typically involves social interaction and communication. They are also often very busy environments. Here are some

tips and strategies for parents and caregivers to help them and their autistic child have a more positive experience at St Hubert.

GETTING READY

USE THESE TIPS TO HELP PREPARE YOUR CHILD BEFORE GOING TO ST-HUBERT:

- Talk about going to the restaurant. You can practice eating in a restaurant at home. You can pretend at the kitchen table. Set the table and use pretend menus to practice ordering. If you use a picture schedule, you may also want to use the restaurant as part of the daily schedule.
- You can talk about restaurant social norms and rules... for example not eating other people's food, not yelling, staying at the table, etc.
- Go to the restaurant during less busy times to get used to it. If you call and speak to the manager and explain that your child is autistic, you may be able to visit the restaurant before or after business hours.
- Review the St-Hubert menu before going. You can even have the child choose what they want in advance and practice ordering.
- Check out the St-Hubert website. They have a social story and visuals that can help you prepare. They may also have a virtual tour of the restaurant.
- Make a reservation, if possible, or call ahead to reduce your wait time at the restaurant. You can include any special requests or information when making the reservation, such as preferred seating, dietary or sensory kit.
- Make sure everyone is hungry when you visit the restaurant.
- Bring your child's communication system, sensory tools, toys and any other things that help them to succeed and stay regulated.
- If your child is a very picky eater and you are not sure if they will eat the restaurant food, bring some food from home.



TIPS FOR FAMILIES WITH AUTISTIC YOUTH GOING TO ST-HUBERT

DURING THE MEAL

ONCE YOU GET TO THE RESTAURANT, THESE STRATEGIES CAN HELP IMPROVE THE MEALTIME EXPERIENCE:

- Request to sit in a booth rather than a table, preferably in a quieter or less busy part of the restaurant. This may help reduce the potential for sensory overload.
- You may ask for a plate of fries or something your child likes as soon as you arrive to avoid waiting too long for meals.
- Remove items from the table that will cause problems...salt/pepper shakers, candles, sharp knives.
- Request the bill before finishing your meal to reduce wait time after eating.
- Request a St-Hubert sensory kit.
- Support your child's communication by offering visual supports. This includes using the menu to help them understand and make choices.

**IF YOUR CHILD IS HAVING A HARD TIME
OR NEEDS A LOT OF SUPPORT,
KNOW THAT THE STAFF AT ST-HUBERT CARE, UNDERSTAND,
WANT TO HELP, AND DON'T JUDGE YOU!**

