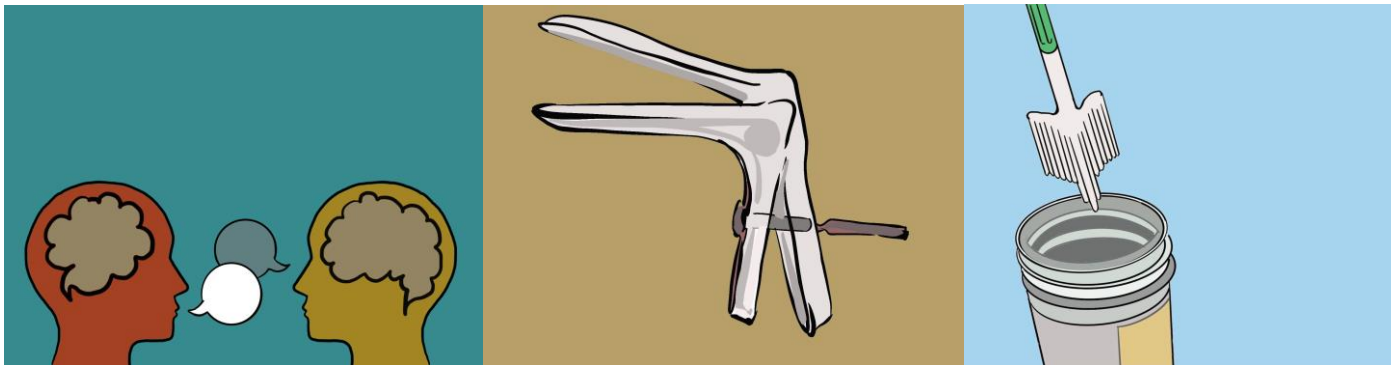


# Sensory processing, smear tests and having an internal examination.

Information about smear tests can be found at [www.jostrust.org.uk](http://www.jostrust.org.uk) including easy read information. Autistic people and people who have a learning disability are less likely to attend screening appointments, including smear tests. One of the barriers may be their sensory processing. Here are some suggestions you may like to consider:



- When we are anxious, we can become hypervigilant and on the look out for danger. This means that we could perceive touch, noise, and visual information more intensely. It may help to notice our breathing and slow it down and breathe through our noses if we can.
- Reducing sensory input using headphones, sunglasses or having something to hold or a comforting smell, may help with sensory regulation too. Clinics are often brightly lit with lots of hard surfaces that reflect sound and lights – this can increase potential overwhelm.
- You should be enabled to be in control of your body during any medical examination. It may be helpful to share if you are autistic or have any other reasons why an examination is difficult for you – but this is your choice. Medical staff should follow your lead without you having to share any information that is distressing for you.
- Consider contacting the relevant doctor before an appointment or procedure to explain what you may need; or to request a double length appointment so that you have more time; or simply to inform them that the appointment may be difficult for you and they will need to work with you to make the examination possible.
- A step-by-step approach could be helpful when having an internal examination or smear test. It may be helpful to understand the variety of sensations that can occur – cold/wet gel, pressure from the speculum, discomfort, or pain – particularly if you are tense. Being able to dictate the rate that the speculum is inserted and opened may enable you to process the different sensations gradually and prepare for the next sensation. Talk with the clinician about what you need.
- Remember to keep all your senses regulated – breathing; noticing where your body is and where it is touching the couch; listening to music if it helps; closing your eyes or wearing sunglasses; holding something comforting, inhaling a soothing smell.
- Ask for a pause whenever you need to. Ask to stop when you need to. You can always book another appointment and try again. Afterwards plan a regulating activity that you enjoy.