

Healthy Outcomes

Happy Nurses Week May 6-12, 2026

Central PA Health Care
Quality Unit
Quarterly Newsletter
Spring 2026



HOW DO FIDGET TOYS HELP AUTISTIC ADULTS?

By [Storybook ABA](#)

Fidget toys serve as tools for self-regulation. Many autistic adults use them to manage stress, reduce sensory overload, and improve focus. These toys are not random objects—they are specifically chosen based on tactile, proprioceptive, or auditory input preferences.

In situations where verbal communication may not be ideal, fidget toys can also offer a physical outlet for emotional energy. They help adults stay calm in stimulating environments like public transportation, office spaces, or crowded stores.

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For some, the repetitive motion of squeezing a ball or rotating a ring helps reduce anxiety while for others, textured or vibrating toys offer needed sensory input.

WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR TYPES OF FIDGET TOYS FOR AUTISTIC ADULTS?

There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to sensory tools. The effectiveness of a fidget toy largely depends on the individual's sensory profile and context of use. Below are some of the most popular and functional categories of fidget tools for autistic adults:



1. TACTILE FIDGET TOYS

These are ideal for individuals who seek texture or need constant hand movement. Tactile input can help calm an overwhelmed sensory system and encourage focus. Examples include:

- **Textured stress balls:** Soft, squeezable balls with bumps that calm the hands.
- **Fidget cubes:** Small cubes with buttons or rollers to keep hands busy.
- **Kinetic sand or putty:** Moldable sand or putty for squeezing and shaping.

2. FIDGET JEWELRY (WEARABLE SENSORY TOOLS)

These combine function and subtlety. Many adults prefer discreet sensory tools they can wear without drawing attention. Examples include:

- **Chewelry (chewable jewelry):** Safe silicone jewelry for chewing needs.
- **Spinning rings:** Discreet rings that spin to reduce anxiety.
- **Textured bracelets:** Bracelets with textures for quiet hand rubbing.



3. AUDITORY AND VISUAL FIDGET TOOLS

Some individuals find comfort in subtle sounds or visual stimulation. These fidget toys serve those specific needs. Examples include:

- **Pop tubes or snap toys:** Make soft clicking sounds that help with calming.
- **Liquid motion timers:** Slow-moving visuals that are soothing to watch.
- **Light-up spinners:** Provide visual input, best used in quiet spaces.

4. WEIGHTED AND PROPRIOCEPTIVE TOOLS

For adults needing pressure or movement-based input, proprioceptive toys are essential. These tools can offer deep pressure or resistance, which supports body awareness and calmness. Examples include:

- **Hand grippers or bands:** Provide resistance to release stress.
- **Weighted lap pads or weights:** Add calming, grounding pressure.
- **Therapy balls or balance discs:** Give movement and body awareness.



5. DISCREET FIDGET TOOLS FOR THE WORKPLACE

For autistic adults in office or academic settings, discretion matters. The following tools blend in while still offering much-needed support. Examples include:

- **Tangle toys:** Quiet, bendable toys for busy hands.
- **Desk pedals or foot rollers:** Allow gentle leg movement under a desk.
- **Magnetic rings or sliders:** Small, silent tools for hands during meetings.



REMINDER: THE BEST FIDGET IS THE ONE THAT THE PERSON CHOOSES AND FINDS HELPFUL.

Autism and Sensory Issues

Sensory issues are common in people with autism, and they are part of the autism diagnosis. Each autistic person is different and may be sensitive to **sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, balance, awareness of body position and movement, awareness of internal body cues and sensations.**

People can be hypersensitive (over-responsiveness) and hyposensitive (under-responsiveness) or a mix of both. [Learn more](#)



BENEFITS OF FIDGET TOYS FOR AUTISTIC ADULTS

IMPROVED FOCUS AND PRODUCTIVITY

Fidgeting can help reduce internal distractions and sustain attention on tasks.



SENSORY REGULATION

Fidget tools help manage both under- and over-stimulation, offering the right level of input.



STRESS AND ANXIETY RELIEF

Fidgeting can reduce nervous energy and promote calmness.



SUPPORT DURING TRANSITIONS

Fidget tools offer predictability and comfort during travel, meetings, or social events.



Upcoming HCQU Trainings

- [Aspiration Awareness](#) 4/7/2026 @10 AM
- [Weis Virtual Cook Along: Strawberry, Basil & Mozzarella Skewer](#)
4/15/2026 @ 10 AM
- [Human Trafficking and Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism \(requires pre-registration\)](#) Presented by Zoe Swisher / Healthcare Outreach Coordinator / The Women's Center Medical Advocacy Program;
4/16/2026 @ 1 PM- 2:30 PM
- [HCQU Dehydration Essentials: What You Need to Know](#)
4/23/2026 @ 11 AM

Join us on April 29, 2026 for the [Life After High School Transition Fair](#) *hosted by HMJ Employment Coalition and Tuscarora IU 11*

—hands-on workshops and resources to help students with IEPs prepare for what's next. Explore employment, independent living, and workplace skills in one supportive event.




Learn at Your Own Pace

Earn Training Credit—At No Cost

Explore [free online healthcare courses](#) anytime, anywhere. Finish a course to earn a certificate and receive credit toward your annual human services training requirement.

High Blood Pressure



Presented by the:
Central PA Health Care Quality Unit

CENTRAL PA HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT

[Aging and Developmental Disabilities](#)
[Allergy Awareness](#)
[Alzheimer's](#)
[Bloodborne Pathogens](#)
[Bowel Management](#)
[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
[Dehydration](#)
[Dental Health](#)
[GERD](#)
[High Blood Pressure](#)
[Menopause](#)
[Seizures and Epilepsy \(coming soon\)](#)
[Skin Health and Pressure Injuries](#)
[Sepsis](#)
[Urinary Tract Infection](#)

HRST – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

When should I contact HRST Gatekeepers? Contact the HRST Gatekeepers to:

- Add a **new employee** to HRST
- Remove an **employee** from HRST
- Notify changes to an **employee's email address**

How do I request an HRST user account?

Complete the [HRST User Account Template](#) and email the completed form to: hrstgatekeepers@geisinger.edu

How often should the HRST be updated?

The HRST must be updated **at least once per year**.
Think of the annual update like a **yearly health check-up**.

When is the best time to complete the annual HRST update?

A great time to complete the annual HRST update is when you are preparing to **renew the person's annual plan**.

Should the HRST be updated only once a year?

No. The HRST should be updated **anytime a person experiences a change** that could affect their scores. This includes events such as:

- Falls
- Injuries
- Seizure activity
- Emergency room visits
- Any significant health changes

Why is it important to update the HRST after changes occur?

The HRST is designed to **track changes in a person's health risk**.

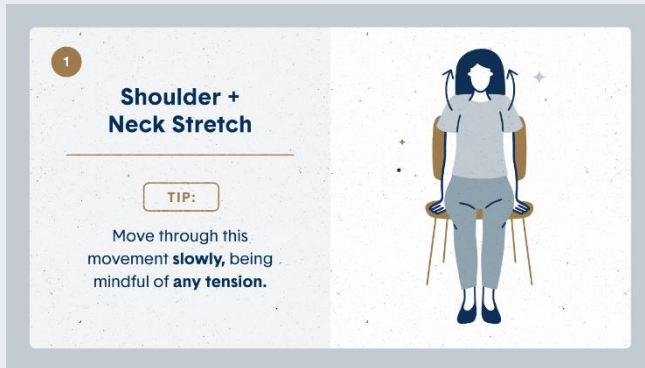
Updating it promptly helps the team:

- Identify movement in health risks
- Respond quickly
- Provide appropriate support

Reminder: Update HRST after ER visits or new seizures.

Neck Stretch

Caring for others often means a lot of standing, looking down, charting, or computer work. This can cause neck tightness or pain. Taking care of your body helps you stay safe, comfortable, and ready to support the people you care for. A gentle stretch you can do anytime.



- Sit or stand up tall and relax your shoulders.
- Gently lower your chin toward your chest.
- Slowly roll your head in a circle—left or right.
- Move slowly and smoothly.
- After one full circle, switch directions.

Do this five times each way.

Stop if you feel pain, dizziness, or sharp discomfort. Stretching should feel gentle, not forced.

Reminder: Small stretches during the day can help prevent neck pain before it starts. Try [four more stretches](#).

Autism Acceptance Month



April autism observances use different colors and symbols with varying meanings. **Blue** is linked to traditional awareness campaigns like [Autism Speaks](#), but many autistic advocates prefer alternatives. **Gold (Light It Up Gold)** and **Red (Red Instead)** emphasize **acceptance and inclusion**. The rainbow infinity symbol represents neurodiversity and the diversity of the autism spectrum. While the puzzle piece is still seen, many autistic adults favor gold or the rainbow infinity symbol as more respectful and inclusive.

Thank you for the work you do every day to keep people with IDA healthy, safe, and respected.

**HCQU
support and
training—
visit our
[website](#).**

Our HCQU team includes registered nurses who have experience supporting people with intellectual disability (ID) and/or autism. Our website is a place for individuals, families, and support staff to find our contact information and see the counties we serve. Our [training calendar](#) lists upcoming training designed for direct support professionals, families, and community providers.

Central PA HCQU [Referral Form](#) | Phone: 570-271-5935