

Emirates continues to support passengers with hidden disabilities



The airline has collaborated with Dubai Airport to make the passenger journey as smooth and positive as possible

As part of its continuing efforts to improve the travel experience for passengers with hidden disabilities, [Emirates](#) has announced that over 24,000 cabin crew and ground staff have completed its "Introduction to Autism and Hidden" Disabilities training.

The update came ahead of World Autism Day on April 2.

Launched in 2022, the online course covers a range of topics from the UAE National Policy for People of Determination, recognizing autism, practical tips on how to assist passengers with hidden disabilities, responding with empathy, and information on the official support systems to help passengers in the airport.

The airline has collaborated with Dubai Airport on a useful travel planner and autism-friendly route to make the pre-boarding experience more seamless and implemented additional thoughtful measures to ensure passenger comfort onboard.

Categorized as a hidden disability, autism spectrum disorder is a neurological and developmental disorder that can affect how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave. Known as a spectrum disorder because there are wide variations in the types and severity of symptoms people experience, a range of sensory needs can occur.

For some travellers, the airport and aircraft experience may feel too noisy, too bright, too unfamiliar, or too busy. These are some of the areas in which Emirates is striving to facilitate planned and positive travel experiences, for customers with autism.

- Emirates supports passengers with hidden disabilities by providing as much information in advance as possible, so that families can plan, rehearse, and be reassured about their upcoming travel.
- Passengers who declare a hidden disability will be seated as much as possible in the complimentary selection of suitable seats, for example the bulkhead seats at the front and middle of the aircraft for both the autistic passenger and their companion
- Book with DPNA code for extra support: A DPNA is an airline industry code for special service requests (SSR) for a passenger with an intellectual or developmental disability. The DPNA code can be applied to a booking made in person, via telephone or travel agent and is applied once the hidden disability is declared so that the passenger will be supported throughout their journey with assistance from trained staff.
- Emirates has collaborated with Dubai International Airport on a comprehensive pre-travel planning tool for passengers with hidden disabilities. The Autism Friendly Guide to Dubai International Airport provides a step-by-step explanation and images of every part of the journey from the airport to boarding and details what services are available.
- The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a globally recognized symbol for hidden disabilities. Emirates staff with Sunflower pins are easily identifiable and specially trained to assist travellers with hidden disabilities. Passengers are encouraged to declare their hidden disability to these staff and collect a Sunflower Lanyard to wear or bring their own from home, allowing for support throughout the airport journey. The sunflower lanyard can be collected from the information desk in Dubai International Airport at Departures, Terminal 3 and from dedicated, easily identifiable collection points in Terminal 1 Priority boarding or board last if preferred.
- People who have declared their hidden disabilities to Emirates staff will have the chance to board the aircraft first if they choose, or last if this is more convenient.
- Families with children are seated together: Emirates makes every effort to seat families with children together, and passengers who have declared their hidden disability will be seated beside their companion or guardian.
- Noise-cancelling earphones: Passengers with an aural sensory need in First and Business Class will have access to noise-cancelling headphones to block out ambient cabin sounds. Travellers can also bring their own Bluetooth-enabled headphones if preferred.
- Light Sensitivity: If the passenger, child or family member informs Emirates cabin crew about a light sensitivity, cabin crew can turn off the passenger's individual light, close the window blind after take-off, and explain that the cabin lights will be dimmed as soon as the meal services are completed.