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Despite the COVID-19 environment, Queensland National Disability Insurance Scheme participants Jess (6), Eden (4) and Jake (23 months) have been able to continue their therapies online with Youthrive – an NDIS service provider offering integrated child therapies.

“Jess, Eden and Jake all have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD),” mum Emily said.

“Jess and Eden also have dysphagia and they are fed using PEG (percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy). Jess has dystonia (involuntary muscle movements) as well, so they all have quite complex needs.

“My partner and I were worried how we would all adapt to online therapy because we had never done it before but so far it has worked out perfectly. We also feel lucky we have the kids’ NDIS funding to rely on so we can continue all the great work we have been doing.”

Emily said she had been impressed with the ways their occupational therapist Hannah, speech therapist Aisling and psychologist Brittni have all been able to continually engage her children.

“We’ve been going through a lot of social stories with the girls at the moment because they’ve been finding it hard to understand this whole COVID-19 environment,” she said.

“It’s been working really well because Hannah can share the screen with us and we can all read them together and talk about what’s going on, what we need to do, and why.”

Jess engaged in an online therapy session.

Emily said she thought the biggest challenge they would face was keeping 23-month old Jake engaged.

“When we have family video calls he is not the slightest bit interested,” she said. “He goes off to do his own thing so when Hannah was able to keep him engaged, I was so impressed.

“She got a book out about a dinosaur, which he loved, and she read it to him while she patted her tummy. He was watching, fully engaged, and then he started patting his tummy!

“The iPad doesn’t seem to be a barrier for him – in fact I think if anything it is working better for him because he’s at home, he’s in a familiar environment, and being a toddler, there isn’t another big adult in the room, which can sometimes overwhelm him.”

Emily said not having to pack up and head out of the house has made a difference too.

“We were travelling quite a lot to the clinic so it has been good not having to get the kids in the car and head out. It’s saving us a lot of time and petrol,” she said.

Youthrive Chief Operating Officer, Amy McAlister, said they were so pleased they could offer Jess, Eden and Jake online therapies.

“Continuity of care is so important for participants,” Amy said. “Offering telehealth services gives them some structure while they manage self-isolation.”

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