



Information

For people with diabetes

MAGNACARESM

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Traveling with Diabetes

People with diabetes are sometimes hesitant to travel due to concerns about disruptions to their meal schedule, unfamiliar foods, finding medications, and other diabetes-related issues. The fact is, with some advance planning, people with diabetes can go anywhere and do almost anything.

While summer and holidays are peak travel times, the winter can be a good time to get away, too. Airfare and hotel prices are lower, there are fewer crowds, and it can be nice to escape the cold, even for a short while.

Before-you-go checklist

Things to do a few weeks before your trip:



Visit your doctor for a checkup to ensure you're fit for the trip. Make sure to ask your doctor:

- How your planned activities could affect your diabetes and what to do about it.
- How to adjust your insulin doses if you're traveling to a different time zone. Remember to bring your flight schedule and information on time zone changes.
- To provide prescriptions for your medicines in case you lose them or run out.
- If you'll need any vaccines.
- To write a letter stating that you have diabetes and why you need your medical supplies.



Get any vaccines you need for your trip a couple of weeks before you leave. That way, if you have any reactions they won't affect your trip.



If traveling abroad, get travel insurance in case you need medical care.



Just in case, locate pharmacies and clinics close to where you're staying.



At least two days before your flight, order a special meal for the flight that fits with your meal plan, such as low in sugar, fat, or cholesterol, or pack your own. Note that domestic flights usually don't include meals, so be sure to bring enough food for your flight.



If you're leaving the country, learn how to say "I have diabetes," "sugar or orange juice, please," and "where is the nearest pharmacy?" in the language or languages of the countries you'll visit.

Packing tips

Pack twice as much medication and blood-testing supplies than you think you'll need and keep this bag with you.

Be sure to pack healthy snacks, like fruit, raw veggies, and nuts. (If you're traveling abroad, you won't be allowed to bring fruits and vegetables on the plane.)

Car travel tips

If you're driving, pack a cooler with healthy foods and plenty of water to drink.

Don't leave diabetes medication, supplies, or equipment in a hot car or direct sunlight. Keep them in a cooler. Don't put insulin directly on ice or a gel pack.

Stop at a rest stop every hour or two and walk around to prevent blood clots.

Air travel tips

People with diabetes are exempt from the 3.4 oz. liquid rule for medicines, fast-acting carbs like juice, and gel packs to keep insulin cool. Check the TSA website for what you're allowed and more information on how to make the screening process go smoothly.

A continuous glucose monitor or insulin pump could be damaged going through the x-ray machine. You don't have to disconnect from either; ask for a hand inspection instead.

Consider briefly disconnecting from your pump during takeoff and landing because the

change in pressure can make the pump deliver more insulin. Check for air bubbles before reconnecting your pump.

To keep track of shots and meals through changing time zones, keep your watch on your home time zone until the morning after you arrive.

If you inject insulin while in flight, be careful not to inject air into the insulin bottle. Differences in air pressure may cause the plunger to "fight you" and make it hard to measure insulin accurately.

Walk up and down the aisles every hour to avoid blood clots.



You've arrived!

Your blood sugar may be out of your target range at first, but your body should adjust in a few days. Check your blood sugar often and treat highs or lows as instructed by your doctor.

If you're going to be more active than usual, check your blood sugar before and after and make adjustments to food, activity, and insulin, as needed.

Food is a huge highlight – and temptation. Make healthy choices. If you're going on a cruise, avoid the giant buffet, and instead order off the spa menu (healthier choices) or low-carb menu.

Don't overdo physical activity during the heat of the day. Avoid getting a sunburn and don't go barefoot, not even on the beach. Check your feet daily.

High outdoor temperatures can change how your body uses insulin. You may need to test your blood sugar more often and adjust your insulin dose and what you eat and drink.

If your vacation is in the great outdoors, bring wet wipes so you can clean your hands before you check your blood sugar.

Important things to note

You should stick with the exact brand and formulation of insulin that you have been prescribed by your doctor. If you run out while you are on the road and your regular brand is unavailable, you may substitute another brand's equivalent formulation. Changes in formulation require medical supervision.

Insulins used in the United States are all of the strength U-100. In foreign countries, insulins may come as U-40 or U-80. If you need to use these insulins, you must buy new syringes to match the new insulin to avoid a mistake in your insulin dose.

Travel always includes some planning. For people with diabetes, it requires a bit more – but that doesn't mean you can't explore new places. The more you plan ahead, the more relaxed you can be on your trip. Happy travels!

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/features/traveling-with-diabetes.html>
<http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/treatment-and-care/when-you-travel.html>
<http://www.diabetesforecast.org/2013/jun/35-top-tips-for-travel-with-diabetes.html>

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