

Holiday and Travel Advice with Diabetes (1 of 2)

Having diabetes will not affect your holiday if you plan ahead. Try and speak to your Diabetes Specialist Nurse or GP at least six weeks before you go away.

Identification

It is important that you wear or carry some form of diabetes identification, in case you are ill abroad or if you are questioned when passing through Customs.

Although you do not need to declare your needles and syringes, it is a good idea to take a letter from your clinic in which your GP explains the types of insulin and the devices that you use.

Insurance

Some travel insurance policies don't cover diabetic emergencies.

Your policy must include pre-existing medical conditions as well as these emergencies, so it's a good idea to check your policy with your insurer before you go. If you are having trouble getting insurance then contact Diabetes UK.

Planning ahead

If you plan your trip well, you will be able to enjoy your holiday without any problems. Your Diabetes Specialist Nurse is there to help you – visit your clinic, before you go, for advice on how to cope.

About your destination

- If you are staying a long time check what insulin will be available in the country you are visiting, as the names and strengths of insulins can vary.
- Learn a phrase in the local language that will get you help if you need it
- Check if you need to have vaccinations to go to your destination. Vaccinations can temporarily affect your diabetes and you may need to adjust your medication as advised.

Your Diabetes Specialist Nurse will give you more in-depth advice regarding how to manage your insulin on your journey.

The journey

- Consider whether or not you would like a diabetic meal on the plane or boat

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If you need this information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 374 208 email: palservice@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital

We ask for information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Author: M Smith
 Date written: March 2006
 Approved: March 2006
 Review date: March 2009
 Code: CSNew104

Holiday and Travel Advice with Diabetes (2 of 2)

- Store insulin in your hand luggage, as it can freeze in the hold of a plane
- Take adequate supplies of insulin and if necessary divide it up between your family and friends
- When crossing time zones keep your injections and meals to your own watch times. Change your watch on arrival and when you arrive back home
- If you travel west the day is longer so you may need more food; if you travel east the day is shorter, so you may need to adjust your meals and insulin accordingly
- Travelling often involves delays, so make sure that you have some carbohydrate with you at all times
- Do not use a blood monitor on the plane as the results may be inaccurate.

If you are going somewhere hot, you should:

- Think about sun safety
- Keep your insulin out of direct sunlight but in a cool place (i.e. cool bag or fridge)
- Monitor your control; a warm climate can cause blood sugars to drop and you may need less medication
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Not walk barefoot on hot sand or other surfaces.

If you are going somewhere cold, you should:

- Take enough warm clothing – lots of thin layers are better than one thick layer
- Monitor your control; a cold climate can make your blood sugars rise and you may need more medication
- Not allow your insulin to freeze.

Blood sugar testing meters and strips may also be affected by hot and cold temperatures and altitude. Speak to your Diabetes Specialist Nurse about the meter that you use.

If you have any concerns or questions about travelling, contact your Diabetes Specialist Nurse or GP.

Holiday checklist

- » Insulin or tablets, needles and pens or syringes
- » ID Passport
- » Blood sugar monitor, finger pricker and strips
- » Extra carbohydrates
- » Insurance and medical documents
- » Travel sickness and anti-diarrhoea treatments
- » Letter from your clinic or GP.

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