

Travel Tips - Be Prepared!

Traveling places special demands on people with diabetes. Unexpected changes in airline schedules, poor timing of meals, and limited food selection are just a few of the common problems. As long as you plan ahead and are prepared, there is no reason to limit your travels.

There are some basic precautions you should take as you plan your travels, including trips by car or train, as well as airplanes. With upgraded security measures at airports around the world, planning now plays a more important role than ever. To help make your travel as stress-free as possible, follow the most recent recommendations of the Transportation Safety Administration and arrive well in advance of the airline's suggested departure check-in time.

General Precautions

- Receive any pre-trip vaccinations early to prevent unexpected reactions from ruining your trip
- Prevent your insulin, test strips and/or glucose sensors from getting too hot or too cool by keeping them with you in your carry-on luggage (if you are generally comfortable, then your supplies generally will be fine)
- Always carry all medications (especially insulin and glucose tablets), snacks and supplies in your carry-on luggage, as this can be critical if your luggage is lost, your flight is delayed or if you are otherwise separated from your checked luggage for an extended period
- Test your glucose more often when you travel, as glucose levels can change due to stress, illness or changes in activity or eating while traveling
- Wear or carry a medical ID indicating you have diabetes – you should also carry identification that includes your name, your doctor's name and phone number, as well as your current medications
- Learn where and how to get medical care at your destination *before* you leave home
- Walk the aisles during long flights/train rides or stop the car on long drives to walk at rest stops to help encourage good circulation, and drink water to avoid dehydration
- Follow your normal daily schedule (including medications, meals, snacks, activity and sleep) as well as you can
- Try to stick to your regular schedule when changing time zones, with meals 4-5 hours apart and gradually make adjustments to new time zones
- If you wear an insulin pump, change the clock on it as you change time zones

What to Pack: Diabetes Supplies

Always pack at least double the amount of supplies you think you'll need.

- Extra insulin and an extra prescription in case your insulin becomes denatured
- Syringes for injections and dosing instructions from your doctor
- Blood glucose meter, test strips and lancets
- Ketone strips
- Glucagon emergency kit (your travel companions should carry the kit, and know when and how to use it)
- Carbohydrate for low glucose treatment and at least one day's supply of food (for example: nutrition bars, which are easy to carry and eat if you are stuck on the tarmac)
- Medication for diarrhea and nausea
- If you wear an insulin pump: supplies and batteries

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Airport Security Screening

- Notify security screeners that you have diabetes, that you are carrying supplies with you and if applicable, are wearing an insulin pump
- All medications that are properly labeled so they are identifiable in any form or type (for example: pills, injectables, or insulin vials) and associated supplies (syringes, sharps disposal container, pre-loaded syringes, jet injectors, pens, etc.) are allowed through the security checkpoint once they have been screened
- Carry your glucagon in its original, pharmaceutically labeled container or box
- Boarding with lancets will be allowed as long as the lancets are capped and they are carried along with a glucose meter with the manufacturer's name embossed on the meter
- Doctors' letters are no longer sufficient proof of medical necessity when you are carrying syringes. In order to board with syringes and other insulin delivery devices, you must produce an insulin vial with a professional, pharmaceutical, pre-printed label that clearly identifies the medication. No exceptions will be made. If the prescription is located on the outside of the box that the insulin comes in, you should carry that as well.

Insulin Pump and Airport Security Screening

- Metal detectors will not harm an insulin pump, and insulin pumps often will not trigger metal detectors so there is no need to remove your insulin pump
- Request that the screeners visually inspect the insulin pump rather than removing it from your body
- Ask for a private screening if a pat down requires the removal or lifting of clothing to display your insulin pump

If you should have problems or difficulty when trying to pass through airport security, ask to speak with the TSA ground security commissioner or the international equivalent. In addition, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) asks that you contact them at 703-549-1500 x-1768 if you encounter problems, so that they may be kept informed of airline protocols and security measures.

Additional Resources

See www.diabetes.org and www.tsa.gov for further travel security updates.