

## Managing Diabetes While on Vacation

Diabetes can be a complex condition that requires a lot of attention and care. Sometimes diabetes can feel like a lot of work, therefore it is vital for people with diabetes to de-stress by going on vacation and enjoying themselves. With a little proper planning, people with diabetes can go away and enjoy a fun-filled vacation and still expertly manage their condition.

### Before You Travel

Prepare to bring at least twice the amount of medication with you on the trip. Plan to bring snacks, glucose gel, or tablets in case your blood sugar gets too low. If you use insulin, plan to pack a <http://www.diabetes.co.uk/body/glucagon.html> emergency kit.

Schedule a doctor's visit at least six to eight weeks before your planned trip, giving you time to complete lab tests and have travel vaccinations that might cause reactions.

When you see your doctor, obtain a letter and a prescription. The letter should contain instructions on what you need to do for your diabetes and alert the Travel Security Administration (TSA), if necessary, about your need to carry insulin and syringes. It should list any medications that you take and whether you have any allergies.

The prescription should be for your insulin or diabetes pills. Prescription laws might vary from state to state, and if you are traveling to a foreign country, you should do your research on how obtainable insulin or needles would be in case you run out.

If you are going to a foreign country, you can get a list of English-speaking doctors from <https://www.iamat.org/> before you go.

People with diabetes must have a medical ID, usually worn as a medical alert bracelet or necklace, when they travel. This medical ID provides vital information about the person's health status, stating that they have diabetes, whether they are insulin-dependent, have any allergies, and so on. In the case of a medical emergency, emergency medical personnel are trained to look for a medical ID, a vital source of information when someone is unable to communicate.

### Traveling by Plane

You should always have food with you, so it is a good idea to buy nutritious food and snacks after you are past security and before you board the plane. Buy items such as nuts, seeds, fruit, yogurt, veggies and dip, sandwiches with lean meat, and salads. Buy juice or candy in case of [www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/Diabetes/hypoglycemia/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/Diabetes/hypoglycemia/Pages/index.aspx).

If you are will be served a meal on the plane, call ahead to request a diabetes-friendly or vegetarian meal.

If you are traveling across time zones, you may need to adjust your insulin. Your doctor can help with planning your insulin regimen.

Bring your diabetes supplies in your carryon as the cargo hold can be too cold for these medications. Keep your medications beneath the seat for easy access.

If you are using an insulin pump, you should briefly disconnect it during takeoff and landing as some studies have shown that flight pressure changes can cause the pump to deliver more insulin. You can reconnect it once the plane has reached cruising altitude. Also look for air bubbles caused by altitude changes before reconnecting. Reprime the pump if necessary.

Inform someone on board that you have diabetes if you are traveling alone.

If you are flying internationally, you may want to call ahead to see what kind of medical kit they have on board.

#### Traveling by Boat

Cruise ships are wonderfully relaxing but offer temptations such as buffets and alcohol. Make wise food choices, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grains, lean protein, nuts, and beans. Limit your alcohol as it can make your glucose spike.

Call ahead to see what type of planning exists for medical emergencies. The medical facility should be able to administer an IV if needed. Ask if you can be airlifted in the event of a true medical emergency or would they wait until the next port.

If lounging by the pool, make sure to protect your feet by never going barefoot.

#### Traveling on the Road

If you are traveling by car, do not store your diabetes supplies in the trunk, glove compartment, or near a window as these areas can overheat and ruin your medication.

Bring extra food such as nuts or protein bars in case you cannot find a restaurant or they are all closed.

#### What to Do When You Get There

If you are having a beach or poolside vacation, protect your feet.

Frequently check your blood sugar (glucose) as diet, activity, and time zones can affect your levels.

<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>

[http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/Diabetes/diabetes-travel/Documents/have\\_diabetes\\_will\\_travel-508.doc](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-topics/Diabetes/diabetes-travel/Documents/have_diabetes_will_travel-508.doc)