



Blue Cross
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Diabetes

Don't Take a Vacation from Your Diabetes Management

Traveling is fun, but it can also be challenging—especially if you've got diabetes. After all, flight delays, traffic jams, and limited on-the-go healthy food options are not conducive to maintaining good health and proper blood sugar levels. That's why it's so important to get ready and get set before you go.



Getting ready. Getting set. Getting on the road.

Whether you're going off for a couple of days at a business conference or a couple of active weeks sightseeing overseas, preparation is the key to proper diabetes management. Here's some helpful information to keep in mind before you travel.

Getting ready

Before you set out on any trip, make sure you have medical clearance from your doctor or healthcare provider. It's a good idea to get a checkup, as well as any immunizations (shots) you may need, at least a month or so before your scheduled departure. This would ensure that your blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose levels are all where they should be.

What to Get Before You Go

- Get a Checkup
- Get Your Shots
- Get a Doctor's Letter
- Get a Prescription



During your doctor visit, make sure that you get a letter explaining that you have diabetes and what steps you need to take to manage your condition. This letter should include whether you take medications or insulin shots, as well as a detailed list of the items you use—like syringes, insulin, and diabetes drugs. Don't forget to get a prescription from your doctor to take with you in case of emergency. Keep these two pieces of paper (the letter and prescription) with you at all times in your travels.

Prescription laws may vary from country to country. So if your travels take you outside of the U.S., it's a good idea to get a list of foreign diabetes associations. You can do so by visiting the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) Web site at www.idf.org or writing to the IDF directly and requesting a list of members. Their address is: IDF, 1 rue Defaeqz, B-1000, Belgium.

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) also recommends that you get a list of English-speaking foreign doctors from the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT), 1623 Military Road, #279, Niagara Falls, NY 14304. You can also visit IAMAT's Web site at www.iamat.org or call them directly at (716) 754-4883.

Note: If you don't have your list with you and an emergency occurs, have someone contact the American Consulate, or a local medical school for you to get a list of doctors.



Getting set

Now that you've had your checkup and shots and secured all your paperwork, it's time to start packing. No, not your luggage, your diabetes management kit. First, figure out the amount of medication and blood-testing supplies you'll need on your trip and double it—you don't want to be caught off guard. Then, make sure that all of your medications and most of your supplies are kept in your carry-on bag.

NEVER put medications or insulin in your checked baggage, because extreme temperature changes can lead to spoilage. (It is OK, however, to store backup supplies, such as an extra glucometer and batteries or testing materials, in your checked baggage.) According to the ADA, here's what should be in your carry-on:

- Insulin and syringes or insulin pen
- Extra set of pump supplies (for pump users)
- Blood- and urine-testing supplies, lancets, alcohol wipes
- Glucometer with fresh batteries
- Oral medications in their prescription bottles
- Glucose tablets or glucagon kit, in original packaging
- A supply of healthy snacks (see right)
- A basic first aid kit
- Your photo ID
- Your doctor's letter and prescription(s)

Packing enough healthy snacks to sustain you and keep your blood sugar levels stable is also a smart idea. Airline delays or extended meetings can throw you off your usual schedule. Here's a list of sensible snacks to consider stocking up on:

- Dried fruit
- Trail mix
- Pretzels
- Granola bars
- Low-fat peanut butter crackers
- Fresh fruit
- Light popcorn

Taking Care of Business

If your job requires traveling away from home, reduce the stress of business travel by keeping on top of your recommended checkups. It's also a good idea to keep your diabetes carry-on kit stocked with a fresh, up-to-date set of supplies, so you'll always be prepared.

NEVER put medications or insulin in your checked baggage, because extreme temperature changes can lead to spoilage.

Getting on the road

You're almost ready for departure. But before you go, here are a few last things to keep in mind:

- **Inform others, inform yourself.** Tell airport security that you have diabetes and try to keep your supplies and medication in their original pharmacy-labeled packaging, which is what the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recommends. Also, check the Transportation Safety Administration's Web site at www.tsa.gov for additional information.
- **Get in the zone.** Make sure you always know what time zone you're in. If you've got an insulin pump, you'll have to adjust the clock accordingly to reflect changing zones. Also, it's important to remember that eastward travel means a shorter day, which may mean less insulin. Conversely, westward travel means a longer day, so more insulin may be necessary.

IMPORTANT: If you're on a plane while preparing your dose of insulin, **be careful not to inject air into the insulin bottle.** According to the ADA, pressure differences in the pressurized cabin can cause the plunger to "fight you," which can make it hard to measure insulin accurately.

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Make sure that all of your medications and most of your supplies are kept in your carry-on bag.



• **Test often.** Blood glucose levels can be elevated by sitting for long periods of time (like on a plane or train) and can be lowered by increased activity (like lots of sightseeing). So test your levels often during your entire travel experience. Remember, you're probably out of your normal schedule, so make any appropriate adjustments to keep your levels steady.

• **Keep your cool.** Be sure to keep your medication and supplies away from extreme heat and cold. If you are going to be in very humid conditions, be sure you keep all your supplies in their sealed containers until ready to use.

• **Put your best foot forward.**
Always bring comfortable shoes and cotton socks.

Planning ahead is the best way to ensure that you'll be looking back at a safe, smooth trip. So put these tips into practice and enjoy your journey!

Notes

