

### Water Purifier

When the water supply is not safe, drink only bottled water or beverages that come in sealed, unopened, and intact containers. Avoid beverages with ice and drinks ordered by the glass. Use water purifier tablets (*halazone tablets*) to treat water that may not be safe to drink. Follow "Directions for Use" carefully; these tablets contain chlorine. Be careful not to confuse them with your regular medicines.

### Storing Medicines

Not in a car! It may get too hot. Some products, such as insulin, need to be stored in a cool place.

### Emergencies

If you feel more comfortable using English and want to locate an American-trained physician, contact the American embassy and/or consulate nearest you. The hotel concierge will be able to help you locate either.

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## Medicines and Travel

"All Aboard" with the Older Adult's Medicine Travel Guidelines



THE PETER LAMY CENTER  
for Drug Therapy and Aging

## Special Patients

### **Preventing Motion Sickness**

Many medicines are available to prevent motion sickness. These include nonprescription antihistamine products and prescription medicines such as topical patches. These medicines should be taken before motion sickness occurs to be most effective.

Medicines used for motion sickness can interact with many prescription medicines, especially those used for certain nervous conditions. They can also make other medical problems worse in some patients. Be sure to inform your doctor and pharmacist of all medicines you are taking and medical conditions you are being treated for before asking for help selecting a medicine.

Keep in mind that all these medicines cause drowsiness and possible confusion. They may cause blurred vision. This could make it difficult to make connections and read schedules while traveling.

### **People with Diabetes**

*Carry with you at all times, within easy reach:*

- all medicines (including insulin in a cool storage container)
- blood or urine testing supplies
- hard candy or sugar cubes, extra food or a snack (in case a meal is not available)
- syringes and a special container for proper syringe and needle disposal

If traveling across more than two time zones by air, you may need to adjust your insulin dose. Flying west makes your day longer—you may need more insulin. Flying east makes your day shorter—you may need less insulin. For exact directions, talk to your doctor before leaving. It may be easier to keep your watch set at “home” time, then reset it upon arrival.

If drawing up insulin while in the air, you will only need to inject one-half as much air into the insulin bottle.

### **Travel is stressful, therefore remember a few travel tips:**

- check blood sugar more frequently
- get instructions from your doctor on what to do if your blood sugar is higher than usual

If your activities increase while on vacation, keep extra snacks with you or adjust your insulin dose. If you will be sitting for long periods of time, plan a walk or get up and stretch frequently.

### **People with congestive heart failure**

If you are taking large doses of diuretics or “water” pills to prevent fluid retention, it is important that you continue to take your medicines during travel. However, you should consider the convenience and accessibility of public restrooms.

**Tip:** When you make your reservation, request an aisle seat near the lavatory.

### **People with severe respiratory diseases**

If you or your travel companion requires portable oxygen, the airline must be notified as early as possible. In addition, certain medical documents will be required. There are extra fees for oxygen equipment.

People with sinus problems should ask their doctor or pharmacist to recommend a medicine to relieve congestion and discomfort due to changes in cabin pressure.

## Special Patients

### **People who wear glasses, use hearing aids, wear dentures, or use special devices**

Carry an extra pair of glasses and take along a prescription for your lenses. Bring several extra hearing aid batteries. Denture wearers should check with their dentist for recommendations on denture repair, should their dentures break during travel. If you use any special equipment, consider planning ahead for any unusual problem.

### **People on special diets**

If you require specially prepared meals, inform the airline or travel agent. If you are on a special diet or need to maintain your usual dietary intake because of a medicine, be certain that you will be able to do so when traveling. People taking anticoagulants (blood thinners) should maintain their usual intake of fresh vegetables and salads and continue to avoid using alcohol.

### **People who have the following medical problems should consult with their doctor before flying or planning other travel:**

- recent surgery
- stroke
- severe heart disease
- severe high blood pressure
- heart attack
- severe anemia
- recent eye surgery
- other serious medical problems

### **People who take several medicines several times a day for any condition**

Traveling across several time zones may make it confusing to take medicines on schedule. If you take a medicine once or twice a day, you may want to keep your watch set on “home” time while in flight. Then when you arrive, set your watch to the new time and begin the next dose after waiting approximately one dose interval.

### **Forgetting a medicine can happen!**

#### **Helpful tips:**

- If you take it once or twice a day, take it when you remember.
- If you take it more than twice a day, wait until the next dose.
- Certain medicines should be taken regularly; stopping these medicines (*e.g. beta blockers*) suddenly may cause your medical condition to worsen.

### **Talk with your doctor and pharmacist about your specific medicines!**

#### **For everybody**

Wear comfortable clothes when traveling. Avoid clothes with a tight waistband, tight shoes, and other constricting garments. Avoid alcoholic beverages, particularly in excess, which can impair thinking and concentration, or interact with other medicines you may be taking.

When making your reservation to travel by air, request that you do not sit next to an emergency exit unless you want to assist in the event of an emergency.

## Other Possible Concerns for Your Trip

### **Vaccinations**

If traveling abroad, contact the Center for Disease Control, International Travelers Hot Line (404) 332-4559, to find out about necessary vaccinations.

### **Malaria prevention**

Several different medicines may be prescribed to decrease the risk of malaria. If you receive a prescription, be certain that it does not interact with your other medicines. Ask about other possible side effects of these medicines.

### **First aid kits should include:**

- bandages
  - gauze
  - antiseptic spray
  - sunscreen
  - pain reliever
  - elastic bandages
  - adhesive tape
  - antibiotic ointment
  - insect repellent
  - laxatives
- (acetaminophen is best)*

Other items might include allergy medicines, antacids, antidiarrheals, and other frequently used nonprescription products.

## Before Leaving

### Make a list of all medicines including:

- brand and generic name
- strength of each medicine
- purpose of each medicine
- directions for use
- name of prescriber
- name and telephone number of pharmacy

### Make a list of all medical conditions including:

- name of the doctor who treats you
- doctor's telephone number and address

### Make a list of all allergies including:

- medicine allergies
- food allergies
- description of the reaction

### Make sure to:

- Keep your medicines with you in your carry-on baggage.
- Take extra medicine with you in case you are delayed.
- Carry an extra copy of each of your prescriptions.
- Keep all medicines in their original containers.

Tip: Use our Personal Medicine Record Booklet. Don't leave home without it!

## Special Problems

### Travelers' Diarrhea

The first step is prevention! Avoid unsafe water supplies and cold foods if there is no refrigeration.

If diarrhea occurs, rehydration is very important. Drink plenty of fluids including water, juices, or special oral rehydration solutions (purchase in powdered form before trip). If diarrhea is severe, prolonged, or contains blood, contact a physician.

Some physicians may prescribe antibiotics to be carried "in case" diarrhea occurs or to prevent diarrhea. To avoid drug interactions, be certain that your doctors and pharmacists know about each medicine that you are taking. Other doctors may recommend that you use bismuth subsalicylate, e.g. Pepto Bismol®.

Overuse of an antidiarrheal medication can be dangerous. Be sure your doctor gives you specific recommendations for the use of prescription and nonprescription medicines.



### Jet Lag

The best cure is rest after your journey. Taking prescription or nonprescription sleep medicines should be avoided since they can cause oversedation, disorientation, and may interact with your other medicines.

### Dehydration

A special problem in hot climates—or simply during long flights—is dehydration. This can be avoided by remembering to drink plenty of fluids.

For patients taking diuretics or certain medicines for heart problems, nervous conditions, or pain relief, it is especially important to drink sufficient fluids. Fluid intake also helps maintain normal body temperatures in extreme hot or cold climates.

### Sun Sensitivity

Many medicines can increase your sensitivity to the sun and result in severe sunburn. Be sure to check with your pharmacist about each medicine (including nonprescription medicines and medicated lotions).