



Travel and Diabetes

People with diabetes can enjoy the experience of travel. All you need is a little extra preparation and the world is yours.

By following some guidelines, most problems can be avoided or treated promptly.

Planning your travel

Travel Agent

- Ask for an accurate itinerary with details of meal times, departure and arrival times and stopovers.
- Arrange for arrival and departure at times of the day that suits you, and allow plenty of time for travel connection.
- Notify the airline if you wish to request an early serving or a low sugar meal.
- Arrange travel insurance for both your health and your belongings. Make sure you are covered for pre-existing conditions and for the places you are traveling to. Contact Diabetes Australia for suggested insurers.
- Medicare will not cover any medical costs incurred overseas; however Australia has arrangements with some countries for emergency care. Contact the Health Insurance Commission on 13 20 11 or www.hic.gov.au for more information. Take your Medicare card.

Visit Your Doctor approximately *four weeks* before you depart

- Have any immunisations. See websites www.dfat.gov.au or www.health.gov.au for more information.
- Check your tetanus cover.
- Obtain a letter for the customs officer explaining why you are carrying syringes, needles, blood testing devices, insulin pump, lancets and medications to prevent any delays through customs. (Have several copies)
- Obtain a letter of introduction to health professionals with details of your diabetes history and management. Include next of kin details. (Have several copies)
- Obtain prescriptions for insulin, tablets and blood glucose testing strips that are readable and include your name, the name and type of the medication, and your doctor's contact details on the label. Ensure sufficient stock, plus extra, for the duration of your travel.

- Obtain prescribed medications to treat travel sickness, vomiting and diarrhoea if appropriate.
- Discuss the effects of time changes on your diabetes routine and the adjustment of insulin doses with your Diabetes Educator or doctor. Remember to take your itinerary on your visit.
- If you are buying new shoes for your trip, buy them well in advance so you can wear them and avoid blisters.



Packing

- Diabetes ID card or tag.
- Blood glucose meter. (and spare if you choose)
- Carry all insulin and medication in your hand luggage.
- Pack your insulin in a small, insulated container or bag. Insulin will be damaged by temperature extremes and must not be frozen or left in the sun for any length of time. Pack an emergency supply in your luggage for the aircraft hold.
- Pack twice the amount of insulin, syringes, medication, blood glucose test strips and a spare insulin pen as required. If flying, divide them between two separate pieces of hand luggage and ask your traveling companion to carry one. Suitcases are often mislaid by airlines, or unexpected extended periods can be spent in transit lounges.
- Carry **quick-acting** carbohydrate foods eg. jelly beans, fruit juice drink in tetra packs, glucose tablets. If you are taking a Glucagen injection, this needs to have a printed name and label as do your other prescriptions.
- Carry **slow-acting** carbohydrate foods eg. dry biscuits, sandwich, sultanas (This is to prevent or treat hypoglycaemia if meals are delayed).
- Letters for custom officers and health professionals.
- Small approved sharps container for lancets and needles (from Diabetes Australia, pharmacies or council).
- First aid kit.



En route



- Arrive at the airport early to avoid rushing.
- If you wish to have 'low sugar' meals, the airline needs to be notified when booking your flight or at least 24 hours prior to departure.
- Meals and snacks are served frequently and you should be able to make good choices from the standard menu.
- If you have not ordered "low sugar" meals, notify the cabin crew of your diabetes on boarding to ensure early service.
- Ask for extra lemonade when offered snacks. These may be needed for the treatment of hypoglycaemia.
- The excitement of travel and lack of exercise may result in high blood glucose levels. When traveling long distances, try and take regular physical activity breaks. Perform regular blood glucose testing and use quick acting insulin if needed.
- If flying, stop-overs are good times for some rapid walking around the terminal.
- During long flights, support stockings can help to prevent swelling and may reduce the risk blood clots in the veins of the legs. Discuss this with your doctor or diabetes educator, and ensure they are the correct size and properly fitted.
- Tablet doses do not need to be adjusted.
- Test your blood glucose in your seat, as it is far easier than in a cramped toilet.
- Wear comfortable shoes and exercise your feet or walk up and down the aisle to promote circulation and prevent swelling of your feet.
- Drink plenty of water.

Insulin regime en route

- Keep your watch set at the time of the country of departure
- Take your insulin and meals according to the time of the country of departure. (See next page for insulin on arrival)
- It is unusual for hypoglycaemia to occur due to lack of exercise.

On Arrival

- Adjust your watch to the local time of your destination. Give your insulin according to this new time.
- You may wish to wear two watches, one set at the time of the country of departure, and one set for time of country of destination.
- Time changes of three to four hours or more generally requires an adjustment of your insulin schedule. Ask your doctor or diabetes educator to help you plan for this insulin adjustment.

- If there is less than three to four hours difference in time, simply have your insulin slightly earlier or later.
- If taking your insulin before resting, ensure you eat prior to sleeping. Have someone wake you in four to five hours so you can check your blood glucose level as you may require a snack. This will prevent hypoglycaemia.

By taking time to plan your holiday you will reduce the stress and make it far more enjoyable.

Remember that different foods and exercise combined with anticipation and excitement will cause variations in your blood glucose levels. So relax and do not expect or aim for your usual control.

Checklist

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes ID card or tag | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insulin | <input type="checkbox"/> Sunhat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insulin Pen | <input type="checkbox"/> Insect repellent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare Insulin Pen | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needles for pen | <input type="checkbox"/> Small Travel alarm Clock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Syringes | <input type="checkbox"/> Disinfectant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lancet Device | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicated Ointment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lancets | <input type="checkbox"/> Plasters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blood Testing Strips | <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-nausea Medicine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blood Glucose Meter | <input type="checkbox"/> Anti-diarrhoea Medicine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare Glucose Meter | <input type="checkbox"/> Analgesics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare Batteries | <input type="checkbox"/> Motion-sickness Medicine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ketostix | <input type="checkbox"/> Moisture Lotion for Feet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes Tablets | <input type="checkbox"/> Quick-acting Carbohydrate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter for Customs Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow-acting Carbohydrate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter for Health Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> Glucose tablets or Gel |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Glucagen Injection |

Take only those items that are pertinent to your travel plans.

BON VOYAGE!!

