



Safety, Health, Injury Prevention

Getting Ready for Your Trip

By Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio, OTD, OTR/L

Once you have decided your travel destination, there are some things you should do. Here are some suggestions:

A. See Your Doctor

1. Discuss your physical abilities and trip plans with your doctor.
2. Get the correct immunizations. If traveling abroad, many countries have different requirements.
3. Ask for written prescriptions for all of the medications you take.
4. Discuss dietary needs and suggestions for nutrition while traveling.

B. Check Your Health Insurance Coverage

1. U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs **do not** provide payment for medical services outside the United States.
2. For medical coverage, check with a travel agency or other private companies who offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations.
3. Check out this publication *Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad* at <http://travel.state.gov>.

C. Pack Medications in Carry-On Bags Only

1. Purchase in advance all the medications and over the counter products needed while traveling, *plus* some extras in case of travel delays.
2. Pack medications in the original labeled containers. Some countries have VERY STRICT rules on narcotics, and may be suspicious of pills in unlabeled containers.
3. Pack medications in a carry on bag, never in luggage. (luggage can be lost, misdirected or damaged)
4. Bring prescription information and the names of their generic equivalents just in case medications are lost, stolen or damaged.
5. Before leaving home, double-check again to make sure medications are safely packed in the carry on hand luggage.



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D. Service and Equipment

1. **Service Dogs:** Some countries have restrictions on service dogs traveling through or arriving in their countries. If you intend to travel with a service dog, be sure to check on possible restrictions with the embassy or consulate of each country that you will visit. If service dogs are permitted, learn about quarantine or vaccination requirements **before** you leave on your vacation. (<http://travel.state.gov>).
2. **Equipment:**
 - a. If you require a wheelchair, scooter or other equipment, do a maintenance check to ensure everything is in working order before you travel.
 - b. Research the availability of rental wheelchair and medical equipment providers in the areas you plan to visit before you depart on your trip.
 - c. Be sure to pack health devices or equipment
 - 1.) if you wear hearing aids, be sure to pack extra batteries.
 - 2.) if you wear eyeglasses, be sure to bring an extra pair of glasses.
 - 3.) If you wear splints, or other orthotic or prosthetic devices, bring them.
 - 4.) if you use assistive devices at home to do basic ADL, be sure to bring them with you.
 - 5.) if you test for diabetes, bring all the supplies you need.
 - 6.) if you have a stoma of any type, be sure to bring all the supplies you need.
 - d. If you have a pacemaker, have it checked before extensive travel. Be sure to carry your pacemaker ID and tell Security you have a pacemaker.
 - e. If you have any metal inserted in your body, tell the Security where it is before going through X-ray. You may always request an alternative security measure.



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E. Airline and Hotel Travel Arrangements

1. Think through air travel plans, considering flight lengths, plane transfers and other logistics.
2. In the United States, the Air Carrier Access Act prohibits airlines from discriminating on the basis of disability. This law affects issues such as denial of service to persons with disabilities, seating, accessible features in terminals and aboard aircraft, requirements regarding attendants, medical certificates, and transport, storage and liability of mobility and medical equipment (such as wheelchairs, scooters and other assistive devices). Unfortunately, the Americans with Disabilities Act does not follow you when you leave the United States. Do not expect when traveling outside of the US that everything will be accessible.
3. The Department of Transportation outlines helpful information in [New Horizons for the Air Traveler with a Disability](#) and [Plane Talk: Facts for Passengers With Disabilities](#). Both of these publications are available at the Department of Transportation's website www.dot.gov.
1. Airline reservations and travel
 - a. When making your airline reservations, inform your travel agent or the carrier of the following:
 - b. 1) Assistance that will be needed while flying and at the airport;
 - 2) Type of disability and equipment used for mobility, such as crutches or a wheelchair;
 - 3) Request for a manual or electric wheelchair to be stored and brought to the airplane door/gate upon arrival;
 - 4) Special diet requirements.
 - b. Arrival at airport: Be sure to arrive earlier than expected in the event of last minute difficulties
 - c. Arrival at destination:
 - 1) Carry a written itinerary and directions of where you want to go (in case someone needs to help you)
 - 2) Carry a map of your planned destinations



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4. Hotel reservations: The same airline suggestions in item 3 just above, might be adapted when making your hotel reservations.
 - a. Make sure that your intended hotel(s) will be able to accommodate your needs.
 - b. In all cases, ask that your needs and requests be documented as part of the reservation and take down the name of the agent. That way, if there is a problem, you will have a clear record of what you requested.

This link is the Office of Aviation Enforcement and Procedures. It has details about traveling with a disability on airlines:

<http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/horizons.htm>

F. Cruise Ships

1. Make sure all recommended age- and medical condition-specific immunizations are up to date, especially influenza vaccine (if appropriate)
2. Follow the prevention and immunization recommendations that apply to each country on the cruise itinerary
3. Pay particular attention to hand hygiene: wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water. If there is no soap and water available, use an alcohol-based product, with at least 60% alcohol, to wash your hands (Updated July 10, 2006); (See article: [Preventing Infections When Traveling](#) for more details.)

This CDC link explains travel on cruise ships.

<http://www2.ncid.cdc.gov/travel/yb/utills/ybGet.asp?section=transportation&obj=cruise.htm&cssNav=browsecyb>