

Planning a trip?

Whether you're camping or cruising, you can go anywhere and do almost anything. It just takes a little planning ahead to handle your diabetes.

How you prepare depends on where you're going and for how long. Will you be crossing time zones? What kind of food will you eat and when? Will you be more active or less active than usual?

Follow these tips -

1. See Your Doctor Before You Go

- Have a medical exam to make sure your diabetes is in good control.
- Get immunization shots -- if you need them at least one month before you leave
- Before any trip, get two papers from your doctor : a letter and a prescription.

2. Prepare for an Emergency Abroad

No matter where you go, wear a medical ID or bracelet that shows you have diabetes. If you're leaving the country, also learn how to say "I have diabetes" and "sugar or orange juice, please" in the language or languages of the countries you'll visit.

3. Medical IDs

Many people with diabetes, particularly those who use insulin, should have a medical ID with them at all times.

In the event of a severe hypoglycemic episode, a car accident, or other emergency, the medical ID can provide critical information about the person's health status, such as the fact that they have diabetes, whether or not they use insulin, whether they have any allergies, etc. Traditional IDs are etched with basic, key health information about the person

4. Packing Tips

The second rule of travel for a person with diabetes: pack at least twice as much medication and blood-testing supplies as you think you need.

Pack all of them in your carry-on bag so that your medication is always with you (checked luggage can get lost).

Whether you travel by car, plane, boat, bike, or foot, you'll want to keep this "carry-on" bag with you at all times. Pack this bag with :

- all the insulin and syringes you will need for the trip
- blood and urine testing supplies (include extra batteries for your glucose meter)
- all oral medications (an extra supply is a good idea)
- other medications or medical supplies, such as antidiarrhea medication, antibiotic ointment, antinausea drugs
- your ID and diabetes identity card
- a well-wrapped, air-tight snack pack of crackers, peanut butter, fruit, a juice box, and some form of sugar (hard candy or glucose tablets) to treat low blood glucose

5. Eating in the Air

When you fly, you can request a special meal low in sugar, fat, or cholesterol. Make your request at least two days before the flight.

If you take insulin, wait until you see your food coming down the aisle before you take your shot. Otherwise, a delay in the meal could lead to low blood glucose. To be safe, always carry some food with you. If your meal is delayed or an order is mixed up, you won't be stuck with an empty stomach.

6. Have Insulin, Will Travel

When you travel with insulin, give some thought to where you'll be storing your supplies. Insulin does not need to be refrigerated, but insulin stored in very hot or very cold temperatures may lose strength.

Don't store your insulin in the glove compartment or trunk of your car. Backpacks and cycle bags can get quite hot in the direct

sunlight. If you plan to travel by car or bike or to be out in the elements, take steps to protect your insulin. Many travel packs are available to keep your insulin cool.

In general, you should stick with the exact brand and formulation of insulin that you have been prescribed by your doctor.

However, if you run out while you are on the road, and your regular brand is unavailable, you may substitute another brand's equivalent formulation (for example, NovoLog for Humalog, Huminsulin R for Actrapid). Changes in formulation (for example, from rapid-acting Humalog to short-acting Huminsulin R) require medical supervision.

7. Crossing Time Zones

If you take insulin shots and will be crossing time zones, talk to your doctor or diabetes educator before your trip. Bring your flight schedule and information on time zone changes. Your doctor or educator can help you plan the timing of your injections while you travel.

Remember : eastward travel means a shorter day. If you inject insulin, less may be needed. Westward travel means a longer day, so more insulin may be needed.

To keep track of shots and meals through changing time zones, keep your watch on your home time zone until the morning after you arrive.

If you inject insulin while in flight, frequent travelers suggest you be careful not to inject air into the insulin bottle. In the pressurized cabin, pressure differences can cause the plunger to "fight you." This can make it hard to measure insulin accurately.

Checking your blood glucose while traveling is as important as when you're at home. Also, check your blood glucose level as soon as