

Travel and Diabetes

Having diabetes doesn't mean you can't travel. Planning is the key to having a great trip, both locally and overseas.

It is a good idea to make an appointment with your diabetes doctor and educator around 4 – 6 weeks before you leave. You will need a **letter** from your doctor containing your **medical history**. This can be shown if you need to seek medical attention while you are away, and can also be used for your medications and medical supplies when passing through security screening and customs.

You also need to develop a **plan** for looking after your diabetes during the trip, which your Diabetes Educator will be happy to help with. To assist with this it is a good idea to bring a copy of your travel itinerary, which contains departure and arrival dates and times and mode of travel. Airlines can also give approximate times and number of meals to be served during flights.

Have a Plan

- Your 'plan' will need to take into account:
- The length of your journey
- If going overseas, check the requirements for carrying medications in each of the countries you will be visiting
- The possibility of travel delays
- The timing between insulin injections and meals
- The availability of carbohydrate foods
- Access to medical services and diabetes supplies
- Changes to your usual diet
- Changes in activity levels
- Changes in meal and sleep routines (especially when crossing time zones)
- What to do if you get sick while you are away.

Taking Medications and Medical Devices through Security Screening

Prescription medicines (e.g. insulin) and prescribed medical devices (eg blood glucose monitors) are allowed in your carry-on luggage when flying. However, you must provide '**proof of need**' for these items. Either a doctor's letter (see above) or your NDSS card can be used as proof of need.

Ensure that your medications are sealed in a clear plastic zip-lock bag and removed from your carry-on luggage (as with other liquids you may be carrying). Tell the security officer that you have medications and medical devices before you place your items on the X-ray conveyor belt, and keep your doctor's letter or NDSS card with your medications. The name on the label of the medications must be identical to the name on your passport and boarding pass. Before travelling contact your airline to see if they have any special requirements.

For more detailed information about travelling with medication visit the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development website:

<http://travelsecure.infrastructure.gov.au/>

http://travelsecure.infrastructure.gov.au/international/faq/faq_medicines.aspx

Insulin adjustment on long flights

Adjustments to your insulin dosage will depend on the time of departure and the duration of your flight, and whether you are on multiple daily injections or an insulin pump.

Suggestions if **injecting insulin**:

- Keep your watch on the time of the place of departure and keep to your usual routine. You may need to carry extra carbohydrate to make this possible.
- If taking 4 injections a day, give pre-meal rapid/short acting insulin during the flight
- Once you have arrived at your destination, give insulin and food according to the local time

Having an **insulin pump** can make blood glucose control easier when you travel. You can adjust boluses for the meals that come at odd hours. If you don't want to eat a meal then don't give a meal bolus. You can also make adjustments for your lack of activity/exercise during the flight. If you usually have multiple basal rates, you may wish to use a temporary basal rate during the flight. You need to discuss the various options with your doctor or educator before you fly.

Refer to the –'[Planning for air travel and holidays with your insulin pump](#)' leaflet that is also on the website.

More Travel tips

- Think about registering your travel plans on smart traveller. This helps the government find you in an emergency or they may be able to help if you get into trouble overseas
- Insulin should never be stopped for any reason
- Do extra BGLs during your flight and while on holidays due to changes in activity levels
- Wear ID that states that you have Diabetes
- Be prepared to give extra doses of rapid/short acting insulin if your BGL is high
- Be prepared for unexpected hypos – carry hypo food with you at all times
- You may need to carry extra carbohydrate with you as well as 'hypo' food
- Don't ask for a 'diabetic diet' on your flights as you may be given a meal containing very little carbohydrate
- There is no need to adjust your insulin regimen if you are on a short flight or are flying to destinations where there is only a small time difference (2-4 hours).

<https://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/Living-with-Diabetes/Everyday-Life/Travel--Diabetes/>

<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/>