

Plan, prepare, pack

Tips for traveling with your medications

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The summer travel months are fast approaching. When you go on a trip, your medical conditions and common ailments go, too! Just as you spend time planning your destination, preparing your clothes and packing your suitcase, the same care should be taken with your medications.

PLAN

Several weeks before you leave on a trip, ask yourself the following questions:

- **How long will I be away?** Dennis Pustinger, a pharmacy manager in Central Florida, recommends you “take three to seven days worth of medication in addition to the medication that you plan to use while you’re away from home. Traveling can be unpredictable and you need to have plenty of medication in case delays occur.”
- **What mode of transportation am I taking—car, motorcycle, recreational vehicle, bus, train, ship or plane?** With

all forms of travel, temperature extremes can be a concern. Overexposure to heat or cold can break down a medicine’s effectiveness and have harmful effects if you take it. Identify if temperature changes are a potential issue and plan steps to prevent problems. For example, luggage stored in a car trunk can get extremely hot. Instead of putting pills in your suitcase, keep them in a styrofoam container with a cool pack.

- **Is my destination domestic or abroad?** Traveling with medications across state lines within the United States is restriction free. When traveling internationally, certain controlled medications are prohibited in other countries or they require documentation from your doctor. Air travel information regarding security, laws and authorizations can be obtained by calling the Transportation Security Administration’s “TSA Cares” toll-free helpline at 1-855-787-2227 or visit “Talk to TSA” online at apps.tsa.dhs.gov/talktotsa. Sari Koshetz, spokesperson for the U.S. Department of

Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration, says, "While we have a wealth of material on our website, we wanted to also provide travelers an avenue for personal communication, helping ensure a thorough understanding of the screening process and reduce anxiety for those who do not travel often."

• **What will I be eating?** Particularly if you're traveling abroad, familiarize yourself ahead of time with the cuisine. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about foods and beverages that are out of your ordinary diet and assess potential food-drug interactions. Plan alternative options, such as packing some canned foods in your luggage.

PREPARE

Proper planning will dictate how to best prepare your medicines for travel. Additionally, create a medicine chart and schedule. Visit the American Heart Association's website at heart.org and search for "medicine chart" to get a free chart that you can download and print.

These documents will not only keep you on track, but should a problem occur, you forget something or unexpectedly run out, you'll have necessary contact information. If the time zone in your destination is different than the one at home, you may need to adjust your medication regimen. Discuss this with your doctor and modify your medication schedule as directed.

Check that your medications are labeled correctly, with your name, drug name and strength, dosage, doctor's name, pharmacy name and phone number and any pertinent warning labels. Keep over-the-counter medicines in their original bottles to avoid mix-ups. If any medications are liquid, air travel limits containers of liquid to 3.4 ounces (100 ml) each, and all must fit into one quart-sized, zip-top plastic bag. However, exceptions can be made. Contact TSA Cares or Talk to TSA for guidelines.

PACK

Medicines (both prescription and over-the-counter) and medical supplies should be packed in one travel case, if possible, and kept with you throughout your travel. Keep needles, syringes and other sharp objects in their original packaging and safely secured. Obtain copies of your prescriptions from your doctor or pharmacist and keep them in your wallet. Remember your insurance card. A travel-size first aid kit may come in handy, with items such as band-aids, gauze, an ace bandage, cotton-tipped applicators, insect repellent, sunscreen, eye drops, saline solution, petroleum jelly, anti-motion sickness medication, medicine to prevent altitude sickness, an antihistamine, medicine for pain or fever, a mild laxative, anti-diarrhea medicine, an antacid, cough drops, an antifungal ointment or cream and antibacterial hand wipes or hand sanitizer. ☑