

DIABETES AND TRAVEL

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Travelling and holidays should be planned in advance and advice sought from the diabetes team when necessary.

Insulin

- Patients should check what types and strengths of insulin are available in the area in which they will be travelling (refer to Diabetes UK or Pharmaceutical Company).
- Insulins used in the UK and most other English-speaking countries are of the strength U-100 (100 units/ml). In some countries insulin may come as U-40 or U-80 strengths.
If these insulins are to be used, the appropriate syringes are required.
- Insulin should not be left in direct sunlight and should be kept in a cool place.
- **Insulin should always be carried in hand luggage to avoid the risk of losing suitcases.**
- Insulin may be absorbed faster in warmer climates, so regular blood glucose monitoring is important.
- Advice on dose or regimen adjustment maybe required for long distance travel. (e.g. crossing time zones)

What to Take

- An adequate supply of insulin, syringes or pens, needles, tablets and testing equipment as necessary, including a spare glucose meter.
- Glucose as drinks, tablets or confectionary, to treat hypoglycaemia
- A diabetes identity card which Diabetes UK can provide in different languages, or wear an identification bracelet or necklace.
- A supply of carbohydrate carried in hand luggage, to cover any travel delays or inedible airline food.
- A letter, from either GP or Diabetes Centre, with a contact telephone number and address confirming the individual has diabetes and routinely needs to carry needles, syringes, lancets and blood glucose monitoring equipment for their treatment (see Appendix 4)

Vaccinations

Patients should be advised to find out whether vaccinations are required for the proposed destination. Occasionally these can cause sickness or 'flu-like symptoms and it is prudent to have them administered well in advance of travel.

Advice: Coping with Illness

- If sickness or diarrhoea develops insulin or tablets should never be stopped even if solid foods cannot be tolerated.
- Carbohydrate intake should be maintained in the form of regular sugary drinks.
- Monitor blood glucose levels frequently.
- Urine should be tested for ketonuria as an early sign of decompensation.
- If sickness or diarrhoea persists medical advice should be sought.

Insurance

- Free or reduced cost emergency treatment is available in other EU countries. The appropriate form is available from Post Offices.
- Travel insurance is vital. Patients should inform the insurance company of the presence of diabetes and ensure that the insurance package provides adequate cover.

Long Haul

- If crossing time zones or travelling for many hours, specific advice regarding adjustments to insulin regimes can be obtained from the hospital team.
- Patients should bring along a flight schedule and information on time zone changes to help plan the timing of injections.

Website <http://www.scottish-internet.co.uk/clients/diabetestravel/>