

Take Caution!

Travelling with Diabetes

Diabetes management can be fairly complex, but it becomes even more difficult when patients travel. The following two tables list some essential tips for doctor to pass on to their travelling diabetes patients.

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What should you tell diabetic patients who are travelling?

- Patients should carefully plan meal arrangements, snacks, and insulin transportation.
- Patients should be ready for long delays on airlines and carry extra food, medications, and glucagons (an injection that can reverse hypoglycemia or low blood sugar).
 - These items should be kept in carry-on bags that are with the patient at all times, rather than in checked luggage.
 - All insulin is stable at room temperature for one month, so there is really no need to worry about refrigeration unless the insulin is left where the temperature may rise above 30 C, in which case it needs to be refrigerated.
- Physicians might want to give patients a letter clarifying their need to have needles and medication with them at all times; this usually helps with security checks at the airport and lets inspectors know passengers have a medical reason to carry needles and drugs.
- Patients should wear a MedicAlert® bracelet listing medical conditions and medications being taken.
- Since exercise, diet, and stress change when patients are on holiday, blood sugar should be monitored closely.

What should be done about monitoring blood sugar

- Being in the sun can cause more rapid absorption of insulin; this needs to be taken into account when visiting the tropics or climates where the sun is different than at home.
- If patients are travelling through different time zones, they may arrive at a destination earlier or later than the time zone they are leaving.

Example: If patients are travelling in a westerly direction, the day is going to shorten and, therefore, a reduction in insulin may be necessary.
- If your patient is having problems with hypoglycemia occurring at night and he/she is dependent on a significant other to monitor and assist in case of trouble, it may be safer to make a reduction in nighttime insulin dose to avoid this serious complication.
- When travelling, insulin vials can occasionally be lost, misplaced, or broken. Some people carry a backup supply of insulin in a different location in case of such an event.
- As part of the backup plan, you might want to give patients an extra prescription.
- In some countries and many states, insulin can be obtained at a pharmacy without a prescription. **Dx**

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