

On holiday

Having diabetes need not stop you from holidaying wherever you want to go in the world. All that is necessary is a little extra planning. Basically the same rules apply as at home: eat regularly and take your insulin or tablets at the appropriate times and in the correct amounts, and monitor your blood glucose levels frequently.

The following hints are to help you enjoy your trip and should help to ensure you have a happy and relaxing holiday.

Before you go

Visit your doctor or specialist nurse in good time. They can talk through any concerns you may have and will be able to give you information about any vaccines you might need. They will also be able to give you an official letter explaining about your diabetes. If you are prone to travel sickness, ask your doctor for some tablets.

If you have a long flight with a change in time zone, discuss whether you will need to adapt your treatment.

In your hand luggage

- Insulin, glucagon kit, syringes or pen device
- Tablets (if you are non insulin dependent)
- Any other medication
- Diabetes identification and doctor's letter
- Test strips
- Finger pricking device, lancets and guards
- Meter and batteries (to last all holiday)
- Tissues
- Record book
- Quick-acting carbohydrate (glucose tablets)
- Slow-acting carbohydrate (digestive biscuits)
- Currency of the country you will land in

Get insurance

Fill in an E111 form, which you can get from the Post Office, and take this with you. This will entitle you to free, or reduced cost, emergency treatment in other European Union countries.

This will not cover all medical expenses so it is worth taking out travel insurance which should include 24-hour medical assistance service. Check this does not exclude pre-existing illnesses.

Diabetes UK runs a travel insurance scheme with added cover for lost/damaged insulin and blood testing kits.

Diabetes UK Quoteline:

0800 731 7432 (7 days per week 8am to 10pm)

En route

Insulin is stable for a month at room temperature but may freeze if left in your luggage in an aircraft hold. Always carry your insulin, syringes and test equipment in your hand luggage. Protect them from extremes of temperature by placing them in an insulated bag or a wide mouthed flask until you get to your destination.

Carry both quick and slow acting carbohydrate with you in case of delays.

On the plane

Airlines tend to give you frequent meals so it is possible to "pick and choose" suitable food from the normal meals. Many airlines will provide meals for people with diabetes if they request them when booking their flights. Carry some food – ideally some biscuits – just in case. Try not to drink alcohol but do drink plenty of water.

If you are travelling West, your day will be longer and you may need extra insulin. If you are travelling East, your day will be shorter and you may need to reduce your insulin or take extra carbohydrate.

Once you arrive, you need to make the best possible "match" between old and new time zones. Although this may lead to a brief imbalance in blood glucose, it is relatively easily handled with blood testing systems and pen injector devices.

Customs

If you carry syringes customs people may get concerned. Take with you an explanation of why you are carrying syringes, signed and officially stamped by your doctor or clinic.



Eating and drinking

It may be difficult to estimate how much carbohydrate is contained in unfamiliar food – it is best to avoid eating things you are unsure about until you are established and can keep a careful check.

Carry some food, such as sandwiches, on your outward journey. Some countries object to fruit or animal products such as meat or cheese being imported so this may be confiscated and should not be relied on.

Remember that tea and coffee is often served already sweetened in countries such as Turkey, Greece, India and Pakistan.



Precautions

In case of language problems carry some form of identification – a card, locket or wristband which explains you have diabetes and what to do if found unwell. These can be obtained from:

MEDIC-ALERT	0800 581 420
MEDI-TAG	0121 200 1717
DIABETES UK	020 7636 6112

If you plan to get insulin abroad, Diabetes UK has a list of what is available in many countries. You can also contact the manufacturers to find out which countries have your brand and where to get them. Check in advance that your type of insulin or a suitable alternative is available.

Remember

Make sure that your travelling companion knows that you have diabetes, what to do in an emergency, and where you keep your glucose.

Leaflets available from Hypoguard

- 1 What is Type 2 diabetes
- 2 What is Type 1 diabetes
- 3 Long-term complications of diabetes
- 4 Hypos, hypers and all that
- 5 Monitoring diabetes
- 6 Diabetes and exercise
- 7 Work and driving with diabetes
- 8 Smoking and alcohol with diabetes
- 9 On holiday with diabetes
- 10 Men and Women with diabetes

Please call the **Hypoguard Freephone Information Line: 0800 371 957** for further copies of this leaflet or other leaflets in the series.

Diabetes management made simple

Hypoguard have a range of blood glucose monitoring systems specifically designed to help people with diabetes manage their glucose levels in their homes. If you would like any information about them, please call the Hypoguard Freephone Information Line: **0800 371 957** 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday or visit our web site at www.hypoguard.com

Hypoguard Limited

Dock Lane Melton Woodbridge

IP12 1PE United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)1394 387 333

UK Technical Service: 0800 0856 152

Fax: +44 (0)1394 380 152

<http://www.hypoguard.com>

On holiday with diabetes

