



## Travelling and diabetes

**Having diabetes doesn't mean your travelling days are over. To ensure you have a safe and enjoyable trip, be sure to plan well and think carefully about what diabetes supplies you will need while travelling.**

**Diabetes NSW is working with Sydney International and Domestic Security at Sydney Airport to train and educate staff about diabetes. If travellers are questioned by security about their diabetes, they may request a 'private screening room' if they are uncomfortable discussing their diabetes in public.**

### General travel tips

- Pack more test strips, insulin, syringes, pens and other diabetes equipment than you will need for the trip. If possible, pack a spare meter in case of loss or damage.
- Take clearly written details of emergency contacts plus your National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) card.
- Customs regulations vary from country to country, so it's advisable to contact the embassy of the country you're visiting before travelling.
- Carry some form of easily absorbed carbohydrate such as juice or jelly beans in case of a hypo, and extra carbohydrate for follow-up treatment.
- If flying, keep insulin, syringes/pens and testing equipment divided between two pieces of hand luggage. Don't place insulin in your regular luggage, as the plane's hold is not temperature controlled and luggage may be damaged or lost.
- Wear some form of identification that says you have diabetes.
- Take a small approved sharps container for used lancets and syringes. Some airlines, hotels and airports offer a sharps disposal service.
- The anticipation/stress of a trip or changes in routine may affect your blood glucose levels (BGLs), so you may need to check your BGLs more often.
- Carry a small first aid kit with you in case of minor illness or injury.
- When booking your flights, you may choose to tell the airline that you have diabetes. However, many "diabetic meals" served in flight are too low in carbohydrate and so a standard meal may be more appropriate. It is also recommended that you carry your own supply of portable carbohydrates, in case of unexpected meal delays or if you dislike the meal offered.
- Discuss your travel plans with your doctor or diabetes educator and make sure you have the letters you will need to comply with airline regulations (see next point). Also, discuss medication adjustments for situations you may encounter, such as diarrhoea and/or nausea.



**Being prepared will help your trip run smoothly and help you relax!**



## Travelling overseas

**If you're planning a trip overseas, you may need to think about vaccinations, allowing for different foods, changes in time zones and extreme climates, as well as being prepared for mishaps such as delays and misplaced baggage. Planning your trip is important. In order to meet Australian air regulations for people with diabetes, consider the following before you leave:**

- Carry several copies of a typed, signed letter from your doctor outlining your diabetes management plan, medications and the devices you use to give medication (if applicable) and test your BGL.
- Carry scripts for all medications and make sure they can be easily read with your name, doctors contact details, the name and type of medication.
- If you're not travelling with an Australian carrier, be sure to check with the airline in advance for specific security guidelines.
- When visiting some countries, certain vaccinations are recommended. Information regarding vaccinations can be obtained from your doctor. Useful websites include [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au) and [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au). It's important to organise this well ahead of time.

### Travel insurance

Travel insurance is highly recommended and it's important to make sure it covers people with diabetes. The Australian government has arrangements with some countries providing benefits similar to Medicare if needed. Remember to take your Medicare card with you.

For more information, call Medicare Australia on 132 011 or visit their [website](#).

## During the flight

- For people on insulin, don't give your insulin injection until the meal is served in case of delay and carry extra food such as dried fruit, muesli bars, biscuits, fruit snack packs or juice.
- For people at risk of hypoglycaemia, ensure that your own supply of hypo foods is readily available.
- To help prevent deep vein thrombosis and to make your trip more comfortable, move about the cabin regularly and do the chair-based exercises as outlined on board.

## At your destination

- Differences in activity, routines, food and stress may affect your blood glucose levels.
- Food options may differ from home - the priority is to maintain carbohydrate intake. If you're going to a different country, doing some research beforehand will help you make appropriate choices.
- Take care with food and drink choices, particularly in developing countries where food hygiene may not be optimal.



**Good preparation may seem time consuming,** but it will ensure you get the most out of your holiday. For more information, contact the Diabetes NSW Customer Care Line on 1300 136 588.

**Changing time zones** If you plan to cross different time zones during your trip, discuss this with your doctor well before the departure date so they can advise you on any changes to your medication routine. It may be easier to keep to your usual routines while travelling, then adjust on arrival. In this case, it's important to have your own supply of food, rather than relying on airline meal times.

## Current developments

### Diabetes NSW and Sydney Airport security authorities are working together to assist people with diabetes when they travel nationally and internationally.

This follows heightened security measures surrounding airline travel in recent times.

Diabetes NSW educators held education sessions to better inform security staff about diabetes and its management. The aim was to make the security process easier for people travelling with diabetes.

One of the topics focussed on syringes, pen needles and lancets, which the Australian Government Federal Department of Transport and Regional Service classify as prohibited items. This means there are areas of the aircraft where these items are banned, however they may be carried on board if they can be verified as medically necessary.

People travelling with diabetes may now also request a private screening room to discuss their condition when passing through security. You can also ask to speak with the Airport Security Supervisor or Airport Manager if any problems arise. This additional advice is offered to those travelling with diabetes:

- Carry a medical practitioner's letter outlining your diabetes, necessary medications and a description of prohibited items such as sharps required for diabetes management.
- Have your current NDSS card as back up.
- Pen needles, blood glucose monitors, lancets and medications should be stored in hand luggage according to manufacturer's directions, preferably in a clear, sealable plastic bag that is available for security inspection.
- All medications should be carried in their original packaging and labelled with the name of the person travelling with diabetes.
- Spare supplies are recommended, preferably carried by a co-traveller if possible.
- Insulin pumps are not classed as prohibited items, however screening procedures require staff to ask where the pump is located and request it be shown for inspection. At no time should it be requested that the insulin pump be detached, taken apart or the batteries be removed.

### Liquids, Aerosols or Gels

From 31 March 2007 people wishing to carry any Liquids, Aerosols or Gels in their hand luggage onto international flights must carry these items inside a clear one litre (20cm x 20cm) plastic bag.

It has not been discussed where the bag will be distributed, but this should either be at the travel agent, the airport's check-in counter or the screening point.

The only exception will be made for passengers with medical conditions and baby food, intended to be consumed on board.

Accordingly, although insulin is a liquid, it will be exempt from this regulation and does NOT need to be carried in the plastic bag, as long as the person carrying it can prove their medical condition, and the insulin is inside its original packaging with the prescription label clearly visible.

You can also find more information from

**TravelSECURE** on the [carriage of liquids, aerosols and gels](#).

**Diabetes NSW recommends** that travellers be aware of security measures and prepare accordingly. Inform your travel agent of your diabetes when arranging travel plans. It is also recommended that you contact the airline to inform them of your diabetes and clarify their policy on carrying medical equipment and medication.

You can read **TravelSECURE's** [Frequently Asked Questions - Traveling with medicines](#) provided by the Australian Government.