

No Reason You Can't Enjoy Traveling You Just Need to Plan Ahead

Just because diabetes is an always present part of life, it doesn't mean you can't enjoy traveling. Ensuring you stay healthy and keep your glucose levels steady requires just a little bit of organization and planning ahead. The American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE) suggests a plan of attack for ensuring your next travel adventure is **safe** and **successful**.

❖ **Over-pack your medications** – Gone for a week? Pack two weeks' worth of your diabetes medications in case of travel delays or misplaced supplies. Also, let your pharmacist know 2-4 weeks ahead of time if you will be away longer than the supplies you have on hand. Often, they can help arrange with the health plan to get you the supplies you need.

❖ **Protect your supplies** – Keep your medications and supplies with you and don't put them in checked luggage or in the trunk of a car. Medications (especially insulin) can be ruined if exposed to extreme temperatures, both, too hot or too cold. If you're flying, keep them in the original package, if possible, and in a separate bag from your toiletries. Transportation Security Administration (TSA), which manages airport security, allows you to go over the 3.4 liquid-ounce carry-on limit for diabetes medications and supplies.

❖ **Identify yourself** – Wear your medical bracelet or necklace that notes you have diabetes. Consider bringing a doctor's note that explains you have diabetes and lists your medications, as well as a prescription in case you need more. Carry a health card that includes your emergency contact and doctor's name and phone number. Learn how to say "I have diabetes," "sugar," and "orange or apple juice, please" in the language of the country you are visiting.

❖ Carry snacks and low blood

sugar treatment– Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) can strike any time and food access during travel is unpredictable, so be sure to bring plenty of snacks such as peanut butter and crackers, granola bars and trail mix as well as glucose tablets or gel.

❖ **Make flying simple**– Tell the TSA folks that you have diabetes (they're used to accommodating people with health issues). Visit www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures for more information. If you plan to inject insulin while flying, be forewarned – the pressurized air can make it more challenging to draw up your insulin, when using a vial and syringe, so **be extra careful**--do not inject air into the bottle.

❖ **Test often**– New foods, increased activity and different time zones can throw your glucose levels off. Be sure to test frequently, including before and after meals. If you take insulin, keeping your levels steady can be tricky when changing time zones. Before your trip, see a diabetes educator, who can help you with adjust your schedule for injecting.

❖ **Favor your feet**– Wear comfortable well-fitting shoes and socks at all times – never go barefoot. Check your feet frequently, especially after a hike or long walk. Feet and ankles often swell during flights so consider wearing light knee-high compression stockings (20-30 mm Hg) Wear a shoe that can be loosened. Pointing and flexing your ankles during a flight can improve blood flow in your calf muscles and decrease swelling as well as lower the risk of blood clots.

❖ **Prepare for a health emergency**–Prior to an overseas trip, check out more information from International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers at www.iamat.org.

The secret to any successful trip is to take plenty of time and plan far in advance of your departure – and that goes double when you have diabetes. For more information about how we can help you plan, call **925.864.3189**.