

## Travel and Diabetes

If travel is part of your lifestyle, it is important to continue even if you have diabetes. However, extra planning is needed to make sure you have a safe and enjoyable trip.

### Getting Ready

- Make sure your diabetes is in good control.
- See your diabetes educators for help with planning for diet and time changes.
- Know your meal plan well and know what your usual serving sizes look like.
- Ask your doctor for a letter outlining your diabetes treatment plan and prescriptions for diabetes medications.

### Tips for Travelling Out of the Country

- Buy health insurance for out-of-country travel.
- If you are travelling to a developing country, make sure your immunizations are up-to-date. For more information, contact the International Travel Clinic at 403-944-7100. If you are visiting an area where malaria is common, start anti-malarial tablets a week before you leave on your trip (you need a prescription for this). Keep taking them for at least 4 weeks after leaving the area.
- Find out what kind of medical facilities are available at your destination. Contact the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers by phone (1-519-836-0102) or e-mail ([info@iamat.org](mailto:info@iamat.org)) for information on English-speaking doctors in foreign countries.
- Bring a translation book with you and learn some key phrases of the country you are visiting (for example, “My blood sugar is low, and I need some sugar.”).

### Packing Checklist

Here is a list of supplies you should bring on any trip:

- letter from your doctor and medical identification (for example, bracelet, necklace, wallet card)
- an extra supply of diabetes medications and blood testing equipment (bring double the amount you would normally use)
- medications to take if you feel or are sick to your stomach, have diarrhea, allergies, a fever, or pain
- sunscreen and insect repellent
- first aid kit
- supply of quick-acting sugar if on diabetes medications
- snacks (for example, juice boxes, granola bars, dried fruit, crackers, cookies)

- comfortable walking shoes and cotton socks
- translation phrase book if you are visiting a country where you do not speak the language

### Tips for Travelling by Car

- Stop once in a while for a break.
- Try to eat your meals on time (every 4–5 hours).
- In case of unexpected delays, carry some food such as cheese and crackers, fruit, and granola bars with you in the car.
- Follow your usual routine for testing your blood sugars. Test more often if you are concerned about hypoglycemia.
- If your blood sugar is low, stop driving right away and treat the low blood sugar. Check your blood sugar levels. **Do not drive** until your blood sugar is above 5 mmol/L. Even after your blood sugar returns to normal, your driving may be impaired for up to 60 minutes.

### Tips for Travelling by Airplane

- Pack your diabetes supplies in your hand luggage and carry it on the plane with you. Do not pack them in your suitcase as it may be lost. If you are travelling with others, split up the supplies and ask them to carry some with them. **Make sure all your prescription medication is in the original prescription bottle and the label is readable.**
- Carry food on the plane with you.
- You can ask the airline or your travel agent to order a diabetic meal.

### When You Get There

- If the water is not safe to drink, drink only bottled water or diet pop. Do not use ice cubes. Eat fruits and vegetables that can be peeled and/or cooked.
- Don't drink milk or other dairy products that may not be pasteurized.
- Try to continue your usual exercise routine.
- Wear sensible walking shoes and check your feet every day. Do not go barefoot, even at the beach.
- You may need to check your blood sugar levels more often because of changes in food and activity.
- If you are vomiting and/or have diarrhea, take your usual medication and see the *Sick Day* guidelines
- If you need medical advice and don't know where to find a doctor, check at a university hospital or with the Canadian Consulate or Embassy.

If you have any questions or concerns, ask your doctor or diabetes educator.