

# Have Diabetes. Will Travel.

By the [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/)

Heading out of town? Leaving your troubles behind? Off on an important business trip? Whenever you travel, your diabetes comes along with you. And while having diabetes should not stop you from traveling in style, you will *need* to do some careful planning. Here are some helpful diabetes travel tips from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

**Plan ahead. Make sure you:**

* Get all your immunizations (shots). Find out what’s needed for where you’re going, and make sure you get the right shots, on time.
* Manage your ABCs: [A1C, Blood pressure, and Cholesterol](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/managing-diabetes/4-steps#step2). See your health care professional for a check-up four to six weeks before your trip to check your ABC numbers. Discuss if you need to make any changes in your diabetes plan to get them in a healthy range before you leave.
* Ask your health care professional for all prescriptions and a letter explaining your diabetes and all other medicine, supplies, and any allergies. Carry this with you at all times on your trip. The prescriptions should be for insulin (IN-suh-lin) and any other medicine that could help in case of an emergency.
* Carry or wear identification that explains you have diabetes. The identification should be written in the languages of the places you are visiting.
* Plan for time zone changes. Make sure you’ll always know when to take your diabetes medicine, no matter where you are. Remember: eastward travel means a shorter day. If you take insulin, less may be needed. Westward travel means a longer day, so more insulin may be needed.
* Find out how long the flight will be and whether meals will be served. However, you should always carry enough food to cover the entire flight time in case of delays or schedule changes.

**Pack properly.**

* Take twice the amount of diabetes medicine and supplies that you would normally need. Better safe than sorry.
* Avoid storing insulin at extreme temperatures.
* Keep snacks, glucose gel, or tablets with you. In case your blood sugar gets too low. If you use insulin, make sure you also pack a glucagon (GLOO-kuh-gon) emergency kit.
* Make sure you keep your health insurance card and emergency phone numbers handy.
* Don’t forget to pack a first aid kit.

**Some things to keep in mind if you are flying:**

* Plan to carry all your diabetes supplies in your carry-on luggage. Don’t risk a lost suitcase.
* Have all syringes and insulin delivery systems (including vials of insulin) clearly marked with the preprinted pharmacy label that identifies the medicine. The airline industry recommends that patients travel with their original pharmacy labeled packaging. Keep your diabetes medications and emergency snacks with you at your seat – don’t store them in an overhead bin.
* If the airline offers a meal for your flight call ahead for a diabetic, low fat, or low cholesterol meal. Ask when the meal will be served so you know when to take your insulin.
* If no food is offered on your flight, bring a meal on board yourself.
* If you plan on using the restroom for insulin injections, ask for an aisle seat for easier access.
* Don’t be shy about telling the flight attendant that you have diabetes – this is really important if you are traveling alone.

When drawing up your dose of insulin, don’t inject air into the bottle (the air on your plane will probably be pressurized).

* For more information about traveling with diabetes, visit the [Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures).
* For more information about managing your health abroad, visit the [U.S. Department of State website](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/your-health-abroad.html).

**Some things to keep in mind on a road trip:**

* Don’t leave your medicine in the trunk, glove box, or near a window – they might overheat. If possible, carry a cooler in the car to keep medicine cool. Bring extra food with you in the car in case you can’t find a restaurant.

**General traveling tips:**

* Lower your risk for blood clots by moving around every hour or two.
* Always tell at least one person traveling with you about your diabetes.
* Protect your feet. Never go barefoot in the shower or pool.
* Check your blood sugar (glucose) often. Changes in diet, activity, and time zones can affect your blood glucose in different ways.

You may not be able to leave your diabetes behind, but you can manage it and have a relaxing, safe trip. To learn more about managing your diabetes, visit the National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases at [www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov)  or call 1-800-860-8747/TTY: 1-866-596-1162.

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*Updated May 2014*