Travel Tips

For people with diabetes

Here are some tips to make your trip as enjoyable and stress-free as possible. Please ask us for help in planning your “diabetes schedule” around your travel schedule.

- Be sure your blood glucose is in your target range before traveling. Set reasonable control goals for yourself during your trip, but do not expect “perfect” blood glucose control while traveling.

- If you will cross time zones, please ask us for help with your medicine and meal schedule. The details will depend on your insulin delivery plan (shots or insulin pump), the length of your flight, and whether you are traveling east or west. We can give you clear advice on how to best manage your diabetes when changing time zones. Even so, it can be challenging to keep your glucose in your target range.

- Take written copies of your prescriptions for all medicines and supplies, in case you are asked about them. It is also a good idea to have a letter from your health care provider that says you have diabetes and need to carry syringes to inject your insulin.

- Bring extra diabetes supplies – more than enough for the length of your trip. You may not be able to find supplies in some places. **Carry all your supplies in your carry-on luggage**, not in a suitcase you check. Insulin packed in your luggage may get too hot or too cold. If this happens, your insulin may not work properly. And, checked luggage can get lost!

- If you use a continuous glucose sensor system, pack the extra sensors in your carry-on bag. Cold temperatures in the luggage compartment can ruin them.

- Review your medical insurance plan. Make sure you have coverage for emergency health care while traveling.

- If you will travel by plane, keep in mind most airlines no longer serve free meals. Some have boxed meals you can buy on the plane. If a meal will be available, you may be able to request a diabetic meal, but you must do this before your trip. Call your airline several days before your trip and ask what food will be available on your flight. **Be sure to carry snacks in your carry-on luggage.**

- Carry a diabetes identification wallet card and wear a diabetes identification necklace or bracelet at all times.
Questions?

Call 206-598-4882

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Diabetes Care Center: 206-598-4882

- Check your blood glucose more often while traveling, and keep a written diary of blood tests. Measure urine ketones if your blood sugar is over 250 mg/dl or if you feel ill.

Travel Checklist

To help you pack for your trip, here is a checklist of supplies to take:

- Blood glucose meter, test strips, lancets, and an extra meter battery.
- Diabetes pills, insulin in vials or pens, or other injectable diabetes medicines.
- Syringes, pen needles, other injection devices, and alcohol swabs.
- Other diabetes supplies as needed: insulin infusion pump, syringe reservoirs, infusion sets, tape, and extra batteries. (*Note: Even if you always use a pump, take some insulin syringes and long-acting insulin such as Lantus (glargine) or NPH with you, in case the pump fails.*)
- Other prescription medicines.
- Emergency supplies such as ketone test strips and a glucagon emergency kit.
- Anti-motion, anti-nausea, anti-diarrhea medicines such as Compazine.
- Diabetes identification.
- Diabetes record book for test results.
- Food and a water bottle. (*Note: You cannot bring any drinks, including water, through security, so plan to buy water after you are in the secure area of the airport. You can also pack an empty water bottle in your checked luggage to use when you reach your destination.*)

Other Resources

**UWMC Travel Clinic**

If you are going to another country, you can get pre-travel immunizations and advice from the Travel Medicine Service at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC). Call the clinic at 206-598-4888 to make your appointment several weeks before you leave on your trip. The Travel Medicine Service can also provide care after your trip, if you need it.

**Health Department**

The Seattle/King County Health Department also offers immunizations and other travel-related health care services. The downtown Seattle clinic is located at 2124 Fourth Avenue, and the phone number is 206-296-4960. You will need to call for an appointment. Health Department clinics in Federal Way, Renton, and Auburn also offer immunizations. These clinics are listed in your phone book’s Blue Pages under **King County Health Centers**. Call first to make sure they still offer this service.