

Travel Tips

Traveling with diabetes requires some extra planning before your trip. These tips can help you avoid problems and control your blood sugar so that you stay healthy while you travel.



Planning and Supplies

Before you go on a trip, ask your healthcare provider for a letter saying that you have diabetes. The letter should say:¹



1. All of the medications you take
2. What supplies you need
3. If you have any food or medication allergies



As you prepare for your trip, you should:

- ✓ Make sure you have medical identification, such as a bracelet or necklace, that says you have diabetes
- ✓ If you will be visiting a foreign country, learn how to say “I have diabetes” and “sugar” or “orange juice” in the language of the foreign country you plan to visit
- ✓ Take extra diabetes medications and supplies in case you need to stay longer or have travel problems¹
- ✓ Pack your medicine and supplies in your carry-on luggage. This includes all pills, your glucose meter and supplies, and snacks
- ✓ Make sure your medicines have your name on them and how much you take
- ✓ Ask your healthcare provider if you need to take a glucagon emergency kit in case of severe low blood sugar. These kits have the supplies that are needed to give a glucose shot if your blood sugar falls too low
- ✓ Break in new shoes 2 to 3 weeks before your trip¹



If you are traveling by plane:

1. Tell airport security agents that you are traveling with diabetes medication and supplies. Let them know if you are wearing a continuous glucose monitor or pump¹
2. Never pack insulin or other medications in checked luggage. People with diabetes can carry more than 3.4 ounces of insulin and other liquid medications through airport security¹
3. Keep your insulin cool in an insulated bag with frozen gel packs
4. Let the flight attendants know you have diabetes
5. Drink plenty of water and limit the amount of alcohol you drink
6. Before you get on the plane, ask if a meal or snack will be served. If no food will be served, bring or buy food to be eaten at the right time
7. Keep your diabetes supplies, emergency snacks, and glucose gel or tablets with you at your seat, not in the overhead bin
8. If you are on insulin, wait until you are about to eat food to give yourself an insulin shot to prevent low blood sugar
9. If you plan to inject insulin in the restroom, reserve an aisle seat so that you can get to the bathroom easily
10. Do not inject air into the insulin bottle before pulling the insulin into the syringe, since the air on the plane is pressurized
11. You may need to adjust your insulin dose if you change time zones. Your healthcare provider will help you decide what changes you will need to make to your insulin dose or schedule

Other tips for traveling with diabetes:



Tell the people you are traveling with that you have diabetes



If you travel to another country and use insulin bought there, it may have a different strength, and you will need to check the label and dose with your healthcare provider



Check your blood sugar more often, including before and after all meals.¹ Changes in your daily habits while you are traveling can affect your blood sugar



Check your blood sugar before driving



Do not leave your medicines in a car or near a window. They may get too hot or too cold.



Move around often so that you do not get a blood clot in your leg



Do not go barefoot to avoid injury to your feet

1. Mullin R, et al. Navigating travel with diabetes. *Cleve Clin J Med*. 2018;85(7):537-542.