

“Traveling While Dealing with Chronic Illness”

By Nancy Becher, Founder, Invisible Entrepreneurs

Although traveling can be relaxing and rewarding, the physical demands can be stressful, particularly for travelers with chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, arthritis, or more. With a little extra planning and preparation, people with chronic illnesses can have safe and enjoyable trips.

If you have a chronic illness and are planning an international trip, visit your healthcare provider or a travel medicine specialist at least a month before you leave. Some chronic illnesses and medicines, such as steroids, can [weaken the immune system](#) and make you more susceptible to travel-related infections. You want to be sure your doctor clears you for your travel first.

Before You Go

- Learn about health and safety concerns at your [destination](#).
- Make an appointment with a [travel medicine specialist](#) or your healthcare provider to get needed vaccines and medicines at least a month before you leave.
 - Discuss your itinerary with your healthcare provider to make sure you get any destination-specific vaccines and medicines, such as yellow fever vaccine or medicine to prevent malaria.
 - If the travel medicine specialist prescribes any medicine for travel, make sure he or she knows what medicines you routinely take to prevent drug interactions.
 - If you plan to be gone for more than 30 days, talk to your doctor about how you can get enough medicine for your trip. Sometimes insurance companies will pay for only a 30-day supply at a time.
- Pack a [travel health kit](#) with your prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines (enough to last your whole trip, plus a little extra), first aid supplies, and your health insurance card.
 - Pack all your medicines and medical supplies in your carry-on luggage. You don't want to be without them if your suitcase gets lost!
 - [Medicines](#) should be in their original prescription bottles; you should also carry copies of your original prescriptions.
 - If you need oxygen or other equipment, notify the airline well in advance. The TSA Cares Helpline (toll-free at 855-787-2227) can also provide information on how to prepare for the airport security screening process with respect to a particular disability or medical condition.

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- Prepare for the unexpected.
 - Find out if your health insurance covers medical care abroad—many plans don't! Consider buying additional insurance that covers health care and emergency evacuation.
 - Make sure you have a plan to [get care overseas](#), just in case you need it.
 - Carry a card with information about your condition including any drug or food allergies, written in the local language. If appropriate, wear a medical alert bracelet or other medical jewelry with this information on it.

Insurance

There are three types of [insurance](#) every traveler should consider buying. These may be especially important for travelers with chronic illnesses.

- Trip cancellation insurance covers the cost of your trip if, for example, you have to reschedule or cancel because you are too sick to travel.
- Travel health insurance covers the cost of healthcare received in other countries. Even if you have health insurance in the United States, it might not cover you overseas.
- Medical evacuation insurance covers the cost of transportation to high-quality healthcare facilities in the event of an emergency. This type of insurance is important if you will be traveling in rural or remote areas.

When selecting an insurance policy, always read the fine print, so you are sure that it covers what you need it to cover.