

Safe Travel Tips for Older Adults

Before you board a plane, train, cruise, or get in your car for a vacation, be sure to check out these expert tips and recommendations from the American Geriatrics Society's Health in Aging Foundation. Whether you are traveling overseas or just a short distance from home, it is important to plan ahead for your healthcare needs.

FIND OUT IF YOU NEED TO UPDATE YOUR VACCINATIONS

If you're traveling overseas, you may need certain vaccinations before departing—up to 6 weeks before you leave, in some cases. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Travelers Health website (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/vaccinations.htm>) to learn what measures you and your fellow travelers may be required to follow when traveling abroad.

TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Explain your travel plans to your healthcare provider, and discuss any travel precautions you should take. Your provider may ask you to come in for a checkup or to get any necessary shots.

ASK WHEN YOU SHOULD TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS

If you take medications, and will be crossing time zones, ask your healthcare provider whether you should take your meds at your usual time in your home time zone, or if you should switch to the local time zone. Also ask if any new foods you might eat while traveling could interact with your medications.

GUARD AGAINST DEEP-VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Older adults run a higher-than-average risk of DVT, which happens when blood clots form in your veins, usually in your legs, and block blood flow. Sitting still for a long time on an airplane or train can contribute to DVT. But some research finds that wearing special "compression stockings" can help prevent this dangerous condition. Check with your healthcare provider.

GET IT IN WRITING

- Make a list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications you take, including the dosage and what time you should take these medications. Ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider to help you create this list and ask them to review it for accuracy. The list should include both generic and brand drug names and the amount of each medication you need to take with you on your trip.
- Ask your healthcare provider for a list of current medical problems you have and how they're being treated.

Having all of this on paper will make it easier for you to get through customs, and easier to get replacement medications if you lose any while traveling. Make a copy of these lists. Carry one with you, and keep the other in a suitcase.

KEEP YOUR PILLS IN THEIR ORIGINAL CONTAINERS

Do this with prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and supplements. This will also make your trip through customs easier.

CARRY NECESSARY MEDICATIONS WITH YOU

Pack your medications in your carry-on bag to avoid loss or damage.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM INFECTION AND DEHYDRATION

- Wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after spending time on a crowded plane, train, or bus, and before eating.
- Use common sense when choosing what to eat and drink. Avoid brushing your teeth with water that isn't safe to drink. The CDC travel site, <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>, includes country-by-country information on illnesses you can get from food and water and how to avoid them.
- Drink plenty of water when traveling by plane. The air inside planes is dry, so bring a large bottle of water with you and drink whenever you feel even the least bit thirsty. Or ask for a bottle of water every time the flight attendant offers a drink.