



# travelling with diabetes

## checklist of things to do before you leave

✓ visit your doctor 4 weeks before your trip for a checkup and to discuss your travel plans. Request a medical letter explaining your diabetes and diabetes supplies. Ask your doctor how to adjust your insulin if you are changing time zones during your travels. Also, find out if you need any vaccines.

✓ ask your pharmacist for a printout of all your medications. If you take insulin make sure that your printout states the type & kind (short/long acting) of insulin you take. Carry this with you at all times on your trip.

✓ ask about airline/airport policies for carrying medications. Airlines require that you have your pills in their original medication bottle. Some require that you have a doctor's note stating you require your medication and supplies such as glucometers, lancet needles, test strips, & insulin needles. Always carry-on your medications and diabetes supplies.

✓ bring identification with you that explains your medical condition. If you were to become ill on your trip and unable to communicate your condition, this would ensure proper treatment. You should also get a Medic Alert bracelet that identifies you have diabetes.

✓ become familiar with the country you are visiting. Learn about their medical system and location of the nearest hospital. Also find out if you have the necessary insurance coverage.

## keeping insulin safe

1) bring enough insulin & supplies for your trip plus extra -What if your trip is prolonged?

2) know where the closest pharmacy is in case you happen to run out of insulin on your trip. If your type of insulin is not available in another country, ask your doctor if there is a substitute brand you could use.

3) keep your insulin in your carry-on luggage. Insulin kept in the unpressurized area of a plane could freeze and be damaged. See point 5 on how

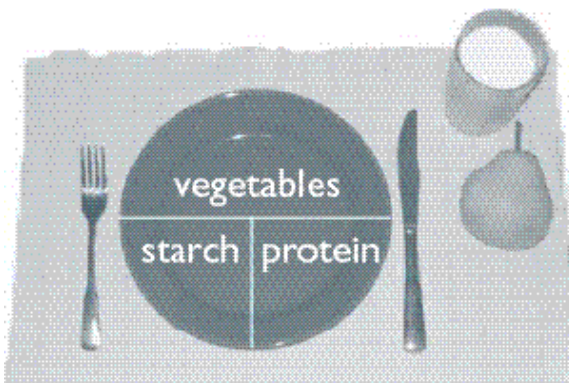
to keep your unused insulin cool.

4) do not leave your insulin in the sun, near radiators, or in glove compartments or trunks because heat damages the insulin. Check the appearance of your insulin periodically and do not use it if there is a change in appearance.

5) insulin needs to be kept cool. For unused insulin, use a FRIIO cooling pack ([diabetesexpress.ca](http://diabetesexpress.ca)) or place in thermos lined with a damp cloth. The insulin you are currently using must not exceed 30°C.

## eating away from home

Fortunately following a diabetes meal plan is easy to do even on vacation. Some challenges may be eating the proper portion size and estimating the carbohydrate content in unknown foods.



## here are a few tips to follow:

Stick to the plate method: 1/2 plate veggies, 1/4 protein, 1/4 starches

Pick food choices that you are comfortable estimating the carbohydrate content of

Choose fresh fruit or a small scoop of frozen dessert over fancy large desserts

At buffets, fill your first plate with all veggies and stick to only 1 plate with proteins & starches

Limit alcoholic beverages to 1- 2 max/day

Avoid added salt, fats, breadings and sugar

Go for baked, poached, & broiled over deep fried or pan fried foods

## flying tips

Many airlines have diabetic meals offered in flight, but most often the regular meal is suitable too.

Always carry a form of fast-acting carbohydrates in case you experience hypoglycemia (low blood sugar).

Bring snacks in case the meal provided does not have enough carbohydrates or your meal is delayed.

Be aware of time zone changes when scheduling your meals and medications.

Always bring your medications and diabetes supplies in your carry-on luggage.

It is best to avoid exposing the insulin to x-ray machines - have it manually checked instead.

## cruising the sea tips

Vacationing on a cruise ship can be a very fun trip, but be aware of the "all-you-can-eat" buffet as you can easily overeat!

It is a good idea to look at the menu of the different types of foods that will be served in advance of your trip.

You can then talk to your diabetes educator before you leave about how to plan your meals.

Also, being active on a confined ship can be difficult so keep active by swimming in the pool, walking around the deck, or going to the gym each day - don't forget about snorkeling too!

For your safety, notify the cruise staff that you have diabetes in case you have any problems and keep a record of all your medications.

## road trip tips

Always check your blood sugar before driving. If your blood sugars are  $< 4.0\text{mmol/L}$ , treat first and wait 45 - 60min before driving.

If your blood sugars are 4 -5mmol/L, eat a carbohydrate snack prior to driving.

Pull over every 4 hours to test your blood sugar and stretch your legs.

If you get a low blood sugar when driving, you should pull over immediately and take 15g of fast-acting carbohydrates through 1/2 cup of regular juice or pop, 3-4 glucose tablets, or 6 lifesavers. Follow this with a longer acting carbohydrate and a protein such as 1/2 a meat sandwich or some cheese and crackers.

Do not drive until your blood sugar is  $> 6\text{mmol/L}$  and you have waited 45-60min.

Limit your driving to six hours between any two meals or 12 hours per day.

Always carry fast-acting carbohydrates with you in case of hypoglycemia and keep food in the car in case there is a delay due to traffic jams, wrong directions, or car problems.

Some easy portable foods are granola bars, fresh fruit, crackers and cheese, and sandwiches.

