

# Preparing for **INTERNATIONAL** TRAVEL with T1D



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## Preparing for International Travel with T1D

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When you're traveling overseas and you have T1D, there are a number of considerations. Make sure you have a passport or visa to allow you to travel (and it's not expired), pack the appropriate clothing, and, of course, pack enough diabetes supplies to last the whole trip. But what exactly does that look like? It depends on what you use to manage your diabetes. Here are some tips for preparing for international travel with diabetes.

### **Bring More Than Enough Supplies**

- If you're using an insulin pump, pack enough to change the pump out every day of the trip. This will allow you to have extras in the event that some of the infusion sets fail. Don't forget batteries or a charging cord for your pump as well.
- If you're using a Continuous Glucose Monitor (CGM), you'll want to make sure you have extra sensors and an extra transmitter, if you have a transmitter. For the Medtronic sensor, you'll also need the inserter and the transmitter charger for the CGM.
- Even if you're not using injections, we recommend taking extra insulin and syringes or insulin pens with pen needles in case the insulin pump fails while you're traveling.
- If you're using injections, make sure you have multiple vials or pens of insulin as well as enough syringes or pen needles.
- If you're using a blood glucose monitor, make sure you have enough test strips, lancets, your lancing device, and batteries for the meter or a charging cord, if that's what your meter requires.
- Low treatments – may need more depending on your travel plans and access to purchasing food.
- Other Supplies

Make sure you pack all your sick day supplies. For this, make sure you have ketone strips or a ketone meter and strips so you can monitor ketones. If you use a CGM most of the time, having a blood glucose meter as a backup is also important! It's also usually a good idea to make some over the counter medications that you may need such as antacids, allergy medications, pain or inflammation medications, etc. If you take prescription medications, you'll also want to pack extras just in case.

Don't forget adapters for chargers – you can look up what style plugs you need based on the country online. It also may be helpful to see if there are pharmacies and hospitals near where you are traveling, so that you have an idea of what resources may be available should you need them. Many other countries do not require insurance to get insulin, but you may need a prescription.

### **Recommended Paperwork**

It's a good idea to have documentation from your doctor that states you have diabetes and what materials you may be carrying. This can come in handy should customs officials have any questions. Depending on where you're going, most customs agents should be able to read English, but again, it depends. You may want to learn key phrases such as "I have diabetes" in the local language.

As mentioned above, you may want to have a prescription for insulin, at the minimum, so that you can get more in an emergency. Some countries do not require prescriptions, so you may be able to get it in those places. We suggest looking online to see what the laws are where you are traveling. In the post-COVID era, some places are requiring documentation of vaccination, so this is something you may want on hand as well.

## Going through Security

Although different airports have different security processes, many of them are similar. Typically, there are x-ray machines that scan bags and then either an x-ray machine or metal detector for the person. Insulin pump companies will suggest that you opt-out of going through the scanning machines and get a hand-pat down. They recommend this because there have been no studies with devices going through the machines.

If you are concerned about keeping your device working, the safest option is to get a hand pat down. The metal detector is also safe, but if you have a pump made of metal (Tandem), you will alarm. Some people put their insulin pump in their bag and send it through the x-ray machines and have not had issues. But it is not recommended by the companies, so you're doing so at your own risk if you chose this method.

Many times, if the security personnel see that you're wearing an insulin pump, they will have you wipe your hands on the pump then swab your hands. This swab then is put into a machine that tests for bomb-related materials. Pro tip: If you have recently touched sunscreen or hand sanitizer, the alarm may go off; then, you're in store for a full pat down. This is where having documentation from your provider can really save you from a lot of extra stress. Luckily, more and more people are aware of diabetes devices and there are less intense questions.

## Considerations

It can be difficult to determine the carbohydrates in foods that you are not used to eating, so it may be helpful to look into typical foods where you're traveling and see if you can get an idea of the carbs in those foods. You may want to travel with snacks such as granola bars in the event that you need more complex foods for treating lows or preventing lows. If you will not be in a climate-controlled environment, consider bringing something, such as a [Frio pack](#), that will keep your insulin at an appropriate temperature.

It's also going to be super important to make sure your cell phone provider knows that you are traveling, and you will probably need to purchase some type of plan for using it out of the country. This will ensure you can look things up online for carb counts, directions, etc. To help prevent communicable illnesses, you can look up recommended vaccinations for the country (or countries) you're visiting. You can also look into anti-malarial preventatives if you're traveling to a place where malaria is common.

## Finding a Diabetes Provider

The International Society for Pediatric and Adolescent Diabetes (ISPAD) has a [page](#) where you can search for medical providers who treat people with diabetes. There are not providers in every country, but you should be able to find one relatively nearby depending on where you travel.

We hope this helps you in your international travel adventures!!