

# TSA PreCheck with Teenagers

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Thirteen years old.

Teenagers.

Last year, my twins became teenagers and I'm still in disbelief that we've all made it this far relatively unscathed. Along the way, we've added one diabetes diagnosis and one autism diagnosis. We've picked up three guinea pigs, two robo hamsters, one diabetes alert dog, one "regular" dog, and a partridge in a pear tree. It's been a wild ride and it feels like we are just getting started.

I've always said that my kids are "growing up in Friends for Life" and are helping to be raised by their CWD family. Each year when we attend Friends for Life conferences, they have the opportunity to learn from others in the diabetes community and it's the best part of our year. In Friends for Life "language," now that my kids are 13, that means that they officially have moved up in the youth program at the conference. They are no longer in the Tween program but instead will join the Teen program this July at Friends for Life Orlando 2023. For those of you that may be unfamiliar with our conferences, during our Friends for Life conference week, the youth attend age-appropriate sessions with similarly aged Fiffles while the adults attend their own concurrent programming. My twins are ready to blast off to their FFL future with the teens, but our space travel was nearly grounded when I realized that our airport travel experience was about to potentially change in a concerning way due to this "aging up" process.

In all of our trips to conferences in the past, my kids been able to go through airport screening by "piggybacking" on the TSA PreCheck of one of their parents because they were under the age of 12. However, once they turned 13, we learned that the TSA can "randomly exclude" them from receiving PreCheck on their boarding pass and require them to use the standard security screening process at the airport. How do I know about this obscure rule? Well, a few months ago, my daughter and I were scheduled to take a quick plane trip. Upon arrival to our airport, we printed our boarding passes. I noticed that I had PreCheck printed on my pass. Shwe did not. I couldn't understand what happened but shrugged it off as some sort of printer glitch and headed toward the TSA PreCheck security lane, as usual. We were stopped at the entrance when the agent noticed the discrepancy on our tickets. The TSA agent explained to me the rules about 13-year-olds and the "random exclusion" and let us know that we'd have to exit the PreCheck lane and use the standard screening lane. For this particular travel day, this situation wasn't a big deal. We didn't panic. We were traveling light and we didn't anticipate that there would be an issue with using the standard screening processes. However, all that I could think about was our future travel and Friends for Life in July when we would be packing for over a week. I was in a conundrum.

I have a 13-year-old traveler with diabetes who routinely travels with liquids, needles, and medical supplies and I've just learned that she may be randomly selected for standard screening. I have a 13-year-old traveler with autism who has sensory processing issues that has trouble with crowds, loud noises, and unfamiliar environments and I've just learned that he may be randomly selected for standard screening. We've been so accustomed to the ease of using my TSA PreCheck when we travel that not having it available for our family was not going to be an option. After the experience of "random selection," I wasn't going to take that chance again.

I am taking the steps so that each of my kids will have their own TSA PreCheck designation. In order to have PreCheck, you must provide proof of identity and citizenship. Neither of my kids have a passport. They haven't had an opportunity to travel

internationally, so we never got them passports, which means they could not use a passport to prove their identity. Without a passport, we needed to seek a photo ID issued by our State. This past week, we scheduled an appointment at our local DMV office so that the twins could register for a state issued identification card. The DMV was everything that you'd imagine...long lines, frustrated employees, anxious new drivers. Thankfully, we had all of our documents organized and our appointments were fairly quick and easy. Each kid now has a Real ID that will last them until they obtain their Drivers Licenses when they turn 16. This state issued ID card can now be used as "proof of identity" and will allow us to schedule an appointment for the TSA PreCheck interview. This identification card (or a passport) along with their certified birth certificate are the two forms of proof of identity and citizenship that are needed for your TSA PreCheck interview. Interviews can be scheduled at your local airports or even at some Staples locations. Our interview is scheduled in about three weeks at a Staples location near our house (and about 30 minutes after that interview we will be having their passport appointments, as well!).

For those of you that will be traveling with newly minted teenagers to Friends for Life (or elsewhere), ALERT! There's still time to schedule PreCheck appointments before the summer conference but you should start to create a plan now. In addition to the surprising issue about PreCheck for kids aged 13-17, here are a few additional tips and reminders about air travel that will hopefully make your summer plans a bit smoother.

### **TSA Cares:**

You can request assistance with the screening process through the TSA Cares program by filling out this form. A TSA agent will meet you at the screening checkpoint and will assist you through the screening process. We've found this program to be especially helpful when we are traveling to a new airport and are unfamiliar with the screening procedures.

### **Medical Devices and Screening:**

Always consult with your device manufacturer about screening procedures at the airport. Some devices are fine to go through the screening machines, others you will need to remove before walking through the detectors and request a hand-screening process. Be prepared to explain to the TSA agents that you are wearing a medical device and say the word diabetes. You will likely be pulled to the side for additional screening measures and may have your hands or your device swabbed. This process is usually very quick and you'll be back on your way as soon as possible. If you are traveling with liquids above 3 ounces, I would recommend being clear with the screening agents that the liquids are for medical purposes and keeping all liquids for diabetes in a separate medical bag with all diabetes supplies and not in your backpack or purse.

Wishing you and your families a great travel season ahead! For those of you traveling with teenagers, may the force be with you and may the PreCheck appear on your boarding passes!

Orange and Green Forever,  
Leigh