

OVERSEAS TRAVEL GUIDANCE FOR PATIENTS

If you are planning on travelling outside the UK, then ideally you should start preparing for your trip at least 8 weeks before you go. But even if time is short, it's never too late to get travel health advice.

You can get advice on travel vaccinations, malaria prevention and general travel health advice from community pharmacies, your GP practice and private travel clinics.

The following websites also provide up to date, reliable, health information to help you plan your trip:

NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/travelhealth>

Fit for Travel: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk>

MALARIA PREVENTION:

Will my GP be able to prescribe anti-malarial tablets for me?

Medicines for malaria prevention are not available on the NHS. Some anti-malaria tablets (chloroquine and proguanil) can be purchased over the counter from a community pharmacy. If a prescription only medicine is required, a GP, certain pharmacies or a travel clinic will be able to provide you with a private prescription.

TRAVEL VACCINATIONS:

Can I go to my GP practice for travel vaccinations?

Yes, although not all vaccines are available on the NHS.

The first thing to do is to contact your GP practice so that a GP or nurse can check your notes to make sure you are up to date with routine vaccinations and advise of any requirements for the country you are travelling to.

Try to make sure you do this at least 8 weeks before you travel as some vaccines need to be given well in advance to ensure you are protected.

The following vaccines are funded by the NHS:

- Diphtheria, polio and tetanus (combined booster)
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- Cholera (depending on certain criteria that will be assessed by a healthcare professional at the clinic/GP surgery)

Will I have to pay for these travel vaccines?

The practice may give you an NHS prescription for these vaccines to be dispensed at a community pharmacy. If you usually pay for your prescriptions, then the standard NHS prescription charge will apply.

What if I need other vaccines which aren't available on the NHS? If you need any other vaccinations you may still be able to get these done, privately, at your GP practice. If not, they will signpost you to a private travel clinic.

As these are not funded by the NHS there will be additional charges. These can include; a charge for writing a private prescription, the cost of the vaccine, administering the vaccine and, if applicable, any follow up blood tests and certification needed.

‘JUST IN CASE’ MEDICATIONS:

Will my GP prescribe me ‘just in case’ medicines such as antibiotics or oral rehydration sachets?

A GP will only prescribe for your current clinical needs. Therefore ‘just in case’ medicines are not available on the NHS.

If your GP feels they are appropriate they may offer to provide you with a private prescription. It’s a good idea to prepare a first aid kit when travelling abroad and your community Pharmacist will be able to give you advice on products that can be purchased over the counter, such as oral rehydration sachets, anti-diarrhoeal medicines, antiseptics etc.

FEAR OF FLYING:

Prescribing of diazepam for fear of flying will not be provided on NHS prescriptions. If a GP deems a prescription to be clinically appropriate it may be provided on a private prescription.

The following websites provide information to help with a fear of flying:

- **Fit For Travel:**

<https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/air-travel#FearofFlying>

- Fear of flying is **common** despite flying being **safer** than road or rail travel in most developed countries.
- Try **distraction** by talking with other passengers, watching a film, listening to music or reading.
- Tell the cabin crew. **Reassurance** about routine aircraft sounds and in flight activities can help.
- Research shows that **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)** can be helpful for more severe cases. The person identifies what they actually fear and then learns different ways of overcoming it.
- A number of airlines run **courses** aimed at alleviating travellers fears, such as:
 - [British Airways Flying with Confidence](#)
 - [Virgin Atlantic Flying without Fear](#)
 - [Easyjet Fearless Flyer](#)

Clinical considerations (for prescribing on a private prescription):

- NICE: Benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam) are associated with a less good outcome in the long term **and should not be prescribed for the treatment of individuals with panic disorder.**
- Sedative-hypnotics (e.g. diazepam) should not be combined with **alcohol** (which is commonly consumed by nervous flyers) because there is a risk of excessive sedation and respiratory suppression.

- Sedative-hypnotics (e.g. diazepam) should not be taken by individuals who may be called upon to make important decisions (e.g. parents responsible for the care of young children or in case of an in-flight emergency) because they can cause **excess sedation** and **impair decision-making**.
- Benzodiazepines (e.g. diazepam) may cause drowsiness, impair concentration and impair decision making which may impair a person's **ability to drive** when they reach their destination.
- The risk of adverse effects is increased in **older adults**, especially those who are older than 75 years

POSTPONEMENT OF MENSURATION:

Prescribing of medication in order to postpone menstruation for e.g. a holiday or event will not routinely be provided on NHS prescriptions.

If a GP deems a prescription to be clinically appropriate it can be provided on a private prescription. Some community pharmacies (via their online services) and some travel clinics offer this treatment.

JET LAG:

Medication (e.g. melatonin) used for jet lag would be classified as a medicine used for travel and in anticipation of an ailment. GPs should therefore not provide a NHS prescription. Private prescriptions may be written for this purpose if deemed clinically appropriate by the GP.

Jet lag is self-limiting and there is limited published evidence of the benefit of melatonin on symptoms (it may have a modest effect compared with placebo). Common side effects of melatonin include headache, nausea, drowsiness and sedation.

Melatonin interacts with many other medications and may increase the frequency of seizures in people with epilepsy. It is not recommended for people with autoimmune diseases.

REGULAR MEDICATIONS for existing long term conditions:

Can my GP prescribe extra medicines to cover my time away?

If you are travelling abroad for up to 3 months then your GP may supply you with a prescription to cover this period.

If you are going to be out of the country for longer than this your GP may supply you with sufficient medication to get you to your destination country. Once you reach your destination you will need to register for medical services there to make arrangements for ongoing supplies of your medicines.

Will I be allowed to take my medications into the country I am visiting?

Different countries have different rules and regulations for medicines - including those you can buy over the counter in the UK.

There may be restrictions on the types of medicines and/or the quantities that you are allowed to travel with. To make sure you don't break any laws you should contact the Embassy for the country you are travelling to.

As a general rule you should always carry medicines in their original packaging, correctly labelled and with a copy of your repeat prescription.

Some countries may require that you carry a letter from your GP stating the reason you are taking your medicines, dosages etc. If so, you should speak to your GP surgery in good time to allow them to write the letter. There may be a charge for this.

Are there any special requirements for controlled drugs?

The rules for controlled drugs depend on the country you are travelling to and the airline you are flying with (if applicable). It is advisable to check directly with your destination Embassy and airline to check their exact requirements.

Anyone taking controlled drugs into/out of the UK also needs to conform to Home Office import/export regulations.

If you are travelling for less than 3 months you will not require a special licence. However, the Home Office advises that you obtain a letter from your GP or drug worker, which should confirm name, travel itinerary, names of prescribed controlled drugs, dosages and total amounts of each to be carried.

If you are travelling for more than 3 months it is expected that you will register for medical services in your destination country to continue to obtain your medicines. To take more than 3 months' worth of controlled drugs out of the UK you will need to obtain a Personal Licence from the Home Office. The application form can be found online and needs to be submitted with a letter from your GP/drug worker at least 10 days prior to travel.

Other countries may also have import regulations so it is important to check this when you contact the Embassy.

Will I be allowed to take needles/syringes in my hand luggage when I fly?

Yes. You will need to take the items in the original, correctly labelled, packaging along with a copy of your prescription. In addition they may require you to carry a letter from your GP. It's a good idea to contact the airline you are flying with to check their exact requirements.

Will the 100ml liquid restrictions apply to medicines I need to carry in my hand luggage?

Essential medication required during air travel may be exempt from the maximum 100ml liquid restriction but this requires a letter and prior approval from the airport and airline. You should contact the airline in advance to make arrangements for this.

PREVENTION OF DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS:

If you think you may be at risk of developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT), seek advice from your GP.

Can I get compression stockings on the NHS?

Compression stockings are not available on the NHS for preventing travel related DVT. If, after discussion with a GP or Nurse you choose to do so, these can be purchased over the counter at a community pharmacy.



TRAVEL INSURANCE & EUROPEAN HEALTH INSURANCE CARDS (EHIC):

Comprehensive travel insurance is essential for all travellers and you should ensure that this provides adequate cover for your current health needs and any planned activities.

What is an EHIC card and how do I get one?

If you are travelling to a country in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, you may be entitled to free, or reduced cost, medical treatment equivalent to the state provided healthcare of that country. To access this you will need a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Applications are free and can be made online at <http://www.ehic.org.uk> or by telephone on 0300 330 1350.