

Carrying Medicines Internationally



There are several considerations that need to be made when traveling with medications. These include whether the medicine is legal in the country you are traveling to or transiting through, whether the medicine requires any special storage provision, how much can be dispensed to you before travel, and if the medicine is available in the country you are visiting in case of emergency.

Legality

Several countries have strict rules about which medicines can be brought in, and the maximum quantity permitted. These restrictions vary between countries, so it is important to be aware of what these restrictions are before you travel.

You must be particularly careful if you are intending to travel with medicines that are controlled substances. For example, prescribed medication for certain disorders and illnesses are classified as controlled substances, despite being used for medical treatment. This includes opioids, stimulants, depressants, and anabolic steroids. Every country is able to declare that certain medications are considered controlled substances, so medicines you may be able to have at home may risk confiscation while traveling. If your medicines are controlled substances, you should always carry a letter from your doctor explaining what your medicines are and what they are for. Medications should also be kept in their original packaging. Without the

correct documentation, possession of such medicines could constitute a criminal offense.

Countries such as India, Pakistan, and Turkey have lists of medicines not allowed in the country. Advice should be sought from the embassy or website of the country you wish to visit to find out what special precautions you need to take to carry your medicines legally.

To safely bring certain substances with you while traveling, you will need a personal import or export license to carry more than a three-month supply. This involves applying to the country you wish to visit for prior authorization to bring your medicines into the country.

Storage

Consult your doctor or pharmacist to learn the best way to store your medication while traveling. Most tablets must be stored below 25-30°C. Certain eyedrops or creams may need to be kept refrigerated. Storing medication incorrectly may affect the shelf life, stability, effectiveness, and even safety of your medicines.

It is also important to check the expiration dates of your medicines before you travel and ensure they are valid for the duration of your visit abroad.

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Supply

We recommend you consult your doctor at least two months before you plan to travel to discuss your medication and obtain a prescription.

It can be useful to find out if your medication is available in the country you plan to travel to, but you must be sure that the supply is reputable and reliable. Counterfeit medications are a growing problem throughout the world. The WHO estimates that many countries in Africa have areas where more than 30% of the medicines on sale can be counterfeit. These counterfeit medications may appear to be real but can be dangerous and/or completely ineffective.

It is best, when possible, to source your medication before you travel. If you do need to buy medicines abroad, make sure they are from a reputable pharmacy and always ask for a receipt. Call the Anvil Assistance line if you require any help or advice with this.

Carrying liquid medication on board an aircraft

Liquids taken past the security search point at the airport should be in containers that hold no more than 100ml. All liquid containers must be placed in a transparent and resealable bag no larger than 20cm x 20cm, or one liter in volume. You will usually be able to fit about five 100ml containers into a bag this size; this should include inhalers and liquid dietary supplements. If your medicine is supplied in containers larger than 100ml, or if you are not able to fit them into the bag, you may still be able to carry these in your hand luggage if you contact the airline beforehand.

You will need to inform the airline that you will be carrying extra liquids and check if they have any extra requirements. It is also advisable to check with the airport you are flying from and returning from and any other airports you will be transiting through during your journey. Remember, extra supplies and larger containers of medicine can go in your checked luggage.

Adjustment of your medication regime across different time zones

If you take regular medications, it can be difficult to adjust your routine to a different time zone when traveling.

If you take your medication once a day, it is easiest to adjust to taking your medication at the same time as you usually would in your new destination. For example, if you take your medication at 10 p.m. in your home country, then take it at 10 p.m. in the destination country. Then switch back to your local time on your return home. Ensure you do not take more than your prescribed dose in a 24-hour period.

For more complicated regimes, you should discuss adjustments with your doctor or pharmacist. Some medications may need more careful planning and need to be taken at the same time. Always continue to take medications as prescribed.

Ensure that jet lag does not interfere with taking medication at the right time by setting an alarm or reminder to take your medicine.



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Further recommendations

You should always carry your medicines and medical equipment in their correctly labeled containers, accompanied by a copy of the prescription, including the generic names of the medicines. Make a note of the manufacturer of your medicines. These recommendations can be helpful during border control checks and in case medicines need to be replaced or medical help is required. A letter from your doctor may also be useful.

Carry additional spare medication in your carry-on luggage in case you lose your checked luggage.

You may be required to contact the airline in advance to make appropriate arrangements if needing to fly with oxygen, insulin, or other injectable medicines. Check to see what your health insurance covers when you are abroad.

When returning home, check that any medicines you have obtained abroad are legal in your home country. If you have started any new medication while abroad, see your regular doctor upon return.

Always call the Anvil Assistance line if help is required with medications or any medical issues during travel.

This factsheet is not a replacement for professional medical advice. Please consult your medical professional for any concerns or queries regarding your medication.

