



Travel and pregnancy

With the proper precautions, most pregnant persons can travel safely well into pregnancy. However, there are some additional considerations for people during their pregnancy, in order to make safe and healthy choices for themselves and their baby.

Before travelling

Although flying itself is generally safe for you and your baby, you should always discuss your travel plans with your doctor or midwife in plenty of time before your trip.

Make sure your travel insurance covers you for any eventuality, such as pregnancy-related medical care during labor, a premature birth and NICU stay, and the cost of changing the date of your return trip if you go into labor.

If you are over 28 weeks pregnant, your airline may ask you for a letter from your midwife or doctor. This letter needs to contain details of when your baby is due, that you are in good health, are not at increased risk of complications, and that you are fit to fly. It is best to check with the airline as to whether there are any specific forms they need completed before you travel.

You should arrange a consultation with a travel health professional before you travel, to discuss any vaccination requirements and travel health measures.

Things to be aware of

Those who are pregnant are more likely to develop swelling of the legs due to fluid retention during a flight and may find that their pregnancy sickness is made worse when flying.

During pregnancy, and for the first six weeks after giving birth, there is a higher risk of developing a blood clot called Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). See our separate information sheet on 'Travel-associated venous thrombosis'.

Compression stockings help to reduce the risk of DVT so it is recommended that these are worn during flights.

It is a good idea to take a first aid kit with you that might help to manage any common issues. This might include medications for nausea and sickness, constipation, hemorrhoids, and acid reflux.

Be aware of the risks relevant to your country of travel

It is also important to be aware of the risk of contracting an infectious disease at your destination. Those who are pregnant are more likely to be bitten by mosquitoes and are therefore more susceptible to malaria and other infections such as dengue fever, zika and chikungunya viruses.

If you are pregnant, it is not recommended to travel to parts of the world where the Zika virus is present, such as parts of:

- South and Central America
- the Caribbean
- the Pacific islands
- Africa
- Asia

If travel to these areas is unavoidable, bite-prevention methods should be discussed with a travel health clinician.

Antimalarials are the most effective means of preventing malaria. However, any side effects and contraindications should be discussed before antimalarials are prescribed, and effective mosquito bite prevention measures should also be used. DEET repellents of up to 50% concentration have a good safety record in pregnancy.

Some countries have poor access to good quality medical care, which needs to be a consideration when traveling to a low resource or remote setting. Find out what health services would be available if you were to experience a miscarriage (typically in the first 12 weeks), an ectopic pregnancy, that might require urgent surgery, or early labor and delivery, including care for the baby. Because of these risks in the first and third trimester, the second trimester is often the safest time for a pregnant person to travel. However, your specific situation should be discussed with your care team.



During travel

Remember to carry your fit to fly letter and pregnancy notes with you to the airport. Carry any medications in your hand luggage with an accompanying letter from your doctor.

During the flight, wear loose clothing and comfortable shoes as well as your compression stockings. Try to get up regularly and drink plenty of water.

At your destination

You should avoid activities that may increase the possibility of accident or injury, such as skiing, horse riding and scuba diving (which can cause danger to your baby through pressure changes).

Regarding the effects of high-altitude during pregnancy, the World Health Organization states that travel to sleeping altitudes over 3000m or to remote areas is not advisable during pregnancy. There are some complications of pregnancy where travel to high altitude should be avoided and this can be discussed with your doctor or midwife.

Be aware that body temperature regulation is not as efficient during pregnancy and an increase in core temperature (such as in heat stroke) may affect your baby. If you are travelling to a country with a hot climate, restrict your activities in the heat and consider whether your accommodation has air conditioning. It is advisable to avoid using saunas, jacuzzis, hot tubs, and steam rooms when pregnant due to the risk of overheating, dehydration and fainting.

Breastfeeding and travel

Breastfeeding is often more practical than bottle feeding when travelling, as it avoids the need to sterilize equipment.

There is no legal limit on how much expressed breast milk, formula milk and/or baby food can be taken through security at the airport. Airport staff may open containers of milk or sterilized water to screen the liquids at the security point.

Most vaccinations are considered safe when breastfeeding, but it may be better to postpone any that are not essential. Expert advice should be sought.

You should be aware that some medications are contraindicated in breastfeeding, such as certain antibiotics. With regard to malaria prophylaxis in breastfeeding, doxycycline should not be used and Atovaquone/Proguanil (Malarone) is not recommended. Mefloquine (Larium) can be used. The breastfeeding child needs their own prophylaxis

In hot climates, you will need to drink much more fluid than usual to ensure adequate breast milk for the baby without the need for supplementary water in babies under six months. Good hygiene is imperative when making up bottle feeds. Be aware that tap water may not be safe for consumption. Bottled water can be used but still needs to be sterilized and the salt content should be checked to ensure it is not above recommended limits for the baby.

[Always call the Everbridge Assistance line if help is required with medications or any medical issues during travel.](#)

References

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This factsheet has been developed for educational purposes and is correct at the time of production. It is not designed as a replacement for professional medical advice. Please consult your medical professional for any concerns or queries regarding pregnancy whilst travelling.