

## **TRAVEL TIPS FOR DIABETICS**

### **Before You Leave**

- Always wear or carry some form of medical identification. You can get a "Diabetes Alert Card" from the American Diabetes Association (800-DIABETES, [www.Diabetes.org](http://www.Diabetes.org)). Have the name and phone number of your doctor with you in case of an emergency.
- Ideally, get a letter from your doctor (on office letterhead) explaining your diagnosis and listing medications and supplies you need. If you don't see your physician, you should write out your diagnosis, as well as the names and dosages of all of your medicines.
- Have required vaccinations weeks ahead of your departure time to avoid reactions that might disturb your blood sugar balance while away from home.
- When planning a trip to areas where English is not the principal language, try to learn how to say: "I have diabetes; please get me to a doctor." and "Sugar or juice, please," in the language of each country you plan to visit.
- If you take oral medications for diabetes, carry enough for the entire trip. You may have trouble getting your prescription filled in a foreign country.
- Take along familiar blood glucose and urine monitoring equipment. Remember, many changes take place during travel, and the only way to assess your control is by monitoring frequently. Also make sure your batteries are up to date.

### **While Traveling**

- If you are traveling by plane, notify the airline 24 hours in advance for a special diet order. Tell the flight attendant that you have diabetes. Bring your medications on the plane with you.
- Keep active while in transit. If you are traveling by car, stop every so often and take a walk for at least five minutes. On a train, walk through the cars now and then.
- On any trips, carry some food or candy or glucose pills in case of an emergency. A flat tire or mechanical failure may leave you stranded far from a restaurant at your scheduled meal time.

### **When You Get There**

- Keep copies of the address and telephone number of your doctor and insurance company near your hotel-room phone and in your wallet or purse. That way, if you need medical attention you won't have to waste time searching for this information.
- You can eat anywhere, but full-service restaurants are usually more compatible with your need for a balanced diet. Don't wait until the last minute to order from room service. Order at least 30 minutes before your scheduled meal time.
- In South or Central America, Asia, and Africa, avoid the following foods: raw meats, milk, ice cream, cream sauces, soft cheese, water or ice cubes, peeled fruits, and lettuce and other leafy vegetables.
- Always carry small cans of juice, dried fruit, peanut butter, crackers, or packaged cheese and crackers. These snacks can be a substitute meal if necessary.
- Remember your basic rules of foot care. Don't wear new shoes on vacation. Check your feet daily. If you get blisters from walking, apply a mild antiseptic and a small gauze pad held in place with non-allergic tape. Don't break blisters! Don't walk barefoot on hot beach sand or in areas where sea shells may cut your skin. Always wear beach or swim slippers, sandals, or some other foot covering.
- If you are ill during a trip, use "sick day management": Check blood sugar frequently. Ice chips or sips of regular (not diet) cola or ginger ale are good for nausea. Try to take some every hour. You may also tea, toast, broth, and soups to replace full meals. If you take oral medications for diabetes and you are too sick to eat, try to drink plenty of liquids. If your blood sugars remain high, call for help.