

Parkinson's Onboard: Traveling with PD

Travel is accessible for many people with Parkinson's disease. The idea of planning and taking a trip may be daunting and stressful for some. However, once broken down into specific categories and questions, the task is not only manageable, but also produces fruitful and satisfying results.

For Starters:

Plan your trip carefully and in advance.

Check your medical insurance policy to be certain that you are adequately covered. Be aware of services provided (or not provided) in other countries.

Ask your neurologist if she can give you the name of a doctor in the area to which you are traveling.

Find out if there is a National Parkinson Foundation Center, chapter, or support group in the area you are visiting.

Don't forget to rest the day before your trip AND the day (or day after) you arrive.

About Medications:

Carry all medication in original bottles, with the name of the drug and your doctor's name on the label.

Bring a copy of your prescriptions (generic and non-generic names) and medication regimen, including your physician's name and contact information.

Bring all your medication, for your entire trip, in your carry-on bag, and include snacks, water, or juice to take with meds.

Bring a replacement supply of prescription medications in case you are detained or your supply is lost.

If you are changing time zones, continue to take your medications as prescribed, with the same intervals between doses. Consider wearing 2 watches: current time, and time at home.

Foreign Travel:

All American citizens require a passport to visit foreign destinations and to re-enter the United States.

At Travel Terminals:

If necessary, request wheelchair or electric cart service within terminals. (Your bags will be handled too!).

Check in early.

Utilize early boarding privileges, and, if necessary, special accommodation to get to your seat.

Request an aisle seat, and as close as possible to bathroom.

Air Travel Specifics:

Airline carriers must provide meet-and-assist service (e.g. assistance to gate or aircraft) at drop-off points.

Personal care assistants of passengers with disabilities are allowed beyond screener checkpoints.

The limit of one carry-on bag and one personal bag (purse) per traveler does not apply to medical supplies and/or assistive devices.

Assistive devices such as canes and wheelchairs are permitted on board.

People who require wheelchair or scooter must have physician's written "certificate of need."

People in wheelchairs can request private, rather than public, checkpoint screenings.

With documentation of medical need, and with proper labeling, syringes are permitted on board.

For a booklet on "Flying with a Disability," published by the United States Department of Transportation, call 202/366-2220.

If you feel that you have been the subject of discriminatory treatment by air carriers, call Transportation Security Administration at 866-289-9673 or email TSA-ConsumerResponse@tsa.dot.gov, or write to:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Transportation Security Administration
Office of Civil Rights
400 Seventh Street SW - TSA-6
Washington, DC 20590-0001.

Rail Travel Specifics:

Have valid photo identification.

Amtrak trains can accommodate most wheelchairs. Amtrak may make random checks of wheelchairs.

A service animal is allowed to travel with the passenger.

Amtrak Guidebook “Access Amtrak – A Guide to Amtrak Services for Travelers with Disabilities” can be ordered from:

Office of Amtrak Access
60 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Bus Travel Specifics:

Greyhound buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts.

Greyhound provides assistance with boarding, de-boarding, luggage, transfers, stowing and retrieving mobility equipment.

Greyhound allows personal attendant to travel one-way at no charge. (Arrangements for a return ticket are made at the returning location).

Service animals and oxygen and respirators are permitted.

Contact Greyhound Customers with Disabilities Travel Assistance Line at least 48 hours prior to departure: 800-752-4841.

Ocean Cruise Specifics:

Ocean liners offer scooters for rent during cruises.

Determine in advance whether any ports of call require a license for a motorized wheelchair.

Hotels:

Ask specific questions. For example, What does “accessible room” actually mean? Is there a walk-in shower? Grab bars? What is the proximity to elevators?

General Reminders:

See fewer sites... enjoy them more!

Give yourself extra time for everything!

Don't let PD hold you back from the trip of your dreams! Bon Voyage!

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