Medicine Safety Tips While Traveling

Traveling takes a lot of planning. Whether it is for work, a family emergency, or a much needed vacation, it is important to think about the medicines you take before you leave home. Ensuring that you have enough of the medicines you take regularly is critical. Prescription medicines are important because they are prescribed by a doctor specifically for you. With preparation you can reduce the chances of something going wrong with your medicine.

Here's What You Can Do

General Travel Safety Tips

- Keep your medicine in its original container. Keeping your medicine in its original prescription container is an important safety measure. Each container (or package) has important information about the medicine. The container is labeled with the medicine's name, dosage, directions of when and how to take, the pharmacy that filled the prescription, and the name of your doctor who prescribed it. Having this information readily available is important should anyone need this information.

- Do not combine different medicines into one container. Combining different medicines into one container to save space may be tempting. However, doing so increases the chance of a mix-up, especially since your normal routine is switched up while travel.

- Be prepared with an extra supply of medicine. Take several days’ worth of medicine in the event you cannot return home as scheduled. This way, you will have extra medicine if trip is longer than originally planned. You may also need to arrange for a new prescription to be sent to where you are staying.

- Keep your medicine stored at the appropriate temperature. Some medicines need to be stored in the refrigerator while others can be stored at room temperature. Extreme temperatures that are too high or too low may affect the medicine so it will not work properly. Be prepared when traveling by bringing warm or cold packs if needed. Never store your medicine in the glove compartment or trunk of your car.

- Prevent your medicine from getting wet. Keep your medicine in a waterproof container, such as a sealable plastic bag, to prevent it from getting wet.

- Take caution with children. Always store medicine in child-resistant containers. If your bags and luggage contain medicine be sure to keep them up and away from children. Even if you are not traveling with children there is a chance an unsuspecting child may be able to access your bag. Know where your medicine is at all times and store it in a secure location once you reach your destination.

- Use caution when traveling to hot and humid regions. If you are traveling somewhere warm and will have prolonged exposure to sun, keep the following in mind:
  - Use caution when wearing medicine patches in extreme heat. Wearing patches while sunbathing or in hot tubs can cause the medicine in the patch to release too quickly causing a dangerous reaction.
  - Some medicines can make you more sensitive to the sun. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any of the medicines you take can make you sensitive to the sun. If you do, use precautions by wearing a hat, covering your arms and legs with lightweight clothing, and applying sunscreen to exposed areas.
Flying With Medicine

Pack your medicine in your carry-on bag. Bring your medicine along with you in the cabin of the plane to prevent it from being exposed to extreme temperatures in the underbelly of the aircraft. This also ensure you will have them should your luggage get lost or delayed.

Know the security process prior to arriving at the airport. All medicines (e.g., tablets, capsules, liquids, drops, and creams) must go through security screening. All medicines should be in their original, labeled containers. If you are traveling with liquid medicines, gels, aerosols, or intravenous medicine that is more than 3.4 ounces, it is allowed in carry-on baggage. Let the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) agent know that you are carrying these products and other related items such as freezer packs.

International Travel

Know the rules in the country you are traveling to. What is legal in the United States could be banned in another country. For example, products containing the over-the-counter medicine pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) is illegal in Japan. In some countries, controlled substances (e.g., codeine, morphine) may have a limit on the quantity you can bring. For example, you cannot travel to Singapore with more than 20 codeine tablets without prior approval. Check with the local embassy for the rules in the country you will be traveling to. Here are two resources you may find useful:

- [https://www.usembassy.gov](https://www.usembassy.gov)

Consider the time difference in the country you will be traveling to. If you will be traveling short term you can keep your medicine on schedule by setting an alarm at the corresponding time that you take it at home. But for some medicine such as insulin, you should discuss with your doctor how to adjust your medicine schedule to the anticipated time zone. If you will be in the new time zone for a greater period of time you can gradually adjust the time you take your medicine. But it is always best to check with your doctor before traveling.

Use caution when buying medicine in another country. If you need medicine while you are traveling outside of the United States, use caution when buying medicine. In some countries counterfeit medicine is common so you should only purchase from a reputable pharmacy. Contact the US Embassy prior to departure for a list of trustworthy doctors and pharmacies should an emergency arise. Also, pack a supply of over-the-counter medicines with you, such as acetaminophen, cold medicine, antidiarrheal medicine, etc.

Tell Someone About Your Medication List While Traveling

Bring a complete list of your medicines (generic and brand), including the reason you take it, the dose, how often you take it, and important phone numbers with you including your pharmacy and doctor. Also list any medical conditions or allergies you may have. Keep this list somewhere safe (like your wallet). Tell those traveling with you about the list and its location. Hopefully you won't need this but if you do it could be a lifesaver. Should you need emergency care your health care team will have an accurate medicine list available.