



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Managing your diabetes: Travel Advice

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Your diabetes team on telephone number 01904 725789  
or email [yhs-tr.diabetesnursespatienttriage@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.diabetesnursespatienttriage@nhs.net)

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Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE  
Telephone 01904 631313

Scarborough Hospital  
Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL  
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## Planning to travel:

- Make sure your travel insurance covers your diabetes and list any medications you may be on. Do you need a Global Health Insurance card? Do not rely solely on this. Also consider any sports or activities you may be undertaking - are these covered in your insurance policy? Some activities, such as Scuba Diving may require a letter from your Diabetes Team giving details about your treatment and blood glucose levels/hypoglycaemia frequency.
- Find out if vaccinations are recommended for your area of travel. Some vaccinations may have temporary effect on your blood glucose levels - contact the Diabetes Centre for support as required.
- If you are on insulin, or injectable therapies, contact the Diabetes Centre (01904 725789) or your GP for a travel letter prior to your journey. This states that you need to carry needles, insulin and hypo treatment in your hand luggage.
- Take identification in the form of an insulin passport (available online or from the Diabetes Centre), or medic-alert (can be purchased online).
- Check the availability of medications, especially insulin, in your country of travel. Some may have different names. Take a list of all the generic names of the medications you are on.

- Some countries require all medications to be taken in the original packaging, with your details on the pharmacy's label.
- Take the contact number for the Diabetes Centre (01904 725789).
- Take extra supplies of medications, needles, testing strips, lancets, batteries etc. and a spare blood glucose meter (if possible). Some countries may measure blood glucose levels differently - mg/dl rather than mmol/L - so be careful. Conversion charts can be found online, if necessary.
- Take a Sharps container.
- Take illness management advice and ketone testing equipment (if appropriate). Also take a simple first aid kit - plasters, painkillers, rehydration sachets.
- Consider purchasing a cool bag, such as a FRIO bag, for injectable therapy if you are travelling somewhere hot.
- Seek advice from your GP or the Diabetes Centre, as necessary, prior to travel.
- Make sure you take some local currency in case you need to purchase any supplies on arrival.

## The Journey:

- If you have a travel partner, split supplies between your hand luggage in case your bags are lost/stolen.
- Always carry insulin and/or other injectable therapies in your hand luggage as they may freeze in the hold.
- Place pen devices, lancets, test strips and needles in a transparent plastic bag in your hand luggage. Keep your travel letter with this.
- If you are on any treatment that may cause hypoglycaemia carry glucose with you. Jelly babies or glucose tablets are ideal as fluids such as Lift Glucose Shot and Coke may be taken off you. Always carry some starchy food, such as biscuits, as hypoglycaemia follow up treatment and in case of delays.
- If you are travelling alone consider informing the in-flight team of your diabetes, especially if you are at risk of hypoglycaemia.
- You do not need to order a 'diabetic meal' on the plane.
- Consider travel sickness. If you are prone to travel sickness, monitor your blood glucose levels closely, keep hydrated and try to eat small amounts of plain carbohydrates (e.g. ginger biscuits, crackers, fruit).

# Time Zone Changes:

- If you are on insulin you may need to adjust the timing of your injections.
- If the time difference is less than four hours, then just continue your injections at your usual times.
- If the difference is greater than four hours, you will need to adjust the timing of your injections as follows:

<p><b>Insulin Regime:</b> Once daily long acting (e.g. Lantus, Toujeo, Humulin I, Abasaglar, Tresiba 100, Tresiba 200)</p>	<p><b>Travelling West (longer day) or travelling East (shorter day):</b> Keep to UK time during the journey. Once you arrive at your destination move injection to usual time (e.g. bedtime)</p>	
<p><b>Insulin Regime:</b> Twice daily mixed insulin (e.g. Humulin M3, Humalog Mix 25, Humalog Mix 50, NovoMix 30)</p>	<p><b>Travelling West (longer day):</b> Take your normal morning and evening insulin whilst travelling. Take half usual insulin dose with a meal when you arrive.</p>	<p><b>Travelling East (shorter day):</b> Take your normal morning and evening insulin whilst travelling.</p>

<p><b>Insulin Regime:</b> Once or twice daily long acting insulin (e.g. Lantus, Levemir, Abasaglar, Toujeo, Tresiba100, Tresiba 200) + rapid acting insulin with meals (e.g. Humalog, Fiasp, Apidra, Lyumjev, Novorapid)</p>	<p><b>Travelling West (longer day):</b> Take rapid acting insulin with any meal containing carbohydrate. If you take once daily long acting insulin keep to UK time for journey.</p> <p>Once at destination move to a convenient time, but if this is greater than 12 hours since your last injection you may need to give a small amount of rapid acting insulin to control blood glucose levels</p>	<p><b>Travelling East (shorter day):</b> Take rapid acting insulin with any meal containing carbohydrate. If you take once daily long acting insulin keep to UK time for journey.</p> <p>Once at destination move to a convenient time but if this is shorter than 12 hours since your last injection you may need to give a smaller amount of your rapid acting insulin with your last meal.</p>
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If you inject long acting insulin twice daily keep injections roughly 12 hours apart.

## **While you are away:**

- Keep monitoring. Blood glucose levels may be significantly different due to temperature, food and activity levels.
- Be careful of hot sand or hot tiles especially if you have nerve damage.
- Wear sandals or swim shoes. Small cuts can easily become infected and cause blood glucose levels to rise.
- If you are on any treatment that may cause hypoglycaemia be aware that alcohol may increase this risk. Have a starchy snack before bed, and do not give any extra insulin to cover for alcohol.
- A travel guide can give you an idea of the kinds of food available locally. It is a good idea to have a knowledge of local carbohydrates. 'Carbs and Cals' have different versions of the App for some countries.



## **Pumps and Continuous Glucose Monitoring Systems:**

- If you have an insulin pump or continuous glucose monitoring system (CGMS), you should contact your airline a couple of weeks before you travel. Failure to notify the airline of medical devices in advance can potentially result in you being unable to take your pump or CGMS on board.
- There is some difference in advice from manufacturers as to whether insulin pumps can go through x-ray machines and full body scanners. It is best to check with your pump manufacturer prior to travel.
- Take insulin pens and spare equipment / consumables with you in case of any problems with your pump.

## **FAQ:**

- **Where can I find out if I need travel vaccines?**  
Websites such as [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) or [www.nathnac.org/travel](http://www.nathnac.org/travel) can help you with this information. Alternatively seek advice from your Practice Nurse.

- **Where can I find more information about adjusting my insulin for different time zones?**  
www.voyagemd.com is a useful resource. You can also see the Diabetes Specialist Nurses or your Practice Nurse for further advice.
- **How do FRIO bags work and where can I buy one?**  
FRIO bags are activated by cold water and keep insulin cool for up to 45 hours. They can be purchased from [www.friouk.com](http://www.friouk.com) and come in a variety of sizes.
- **Can people with diabetes wear flight socks?**  
Often packaging states not suitable for those with diabetes. If you have problems with your circulation or have any ulcers/wounds on your legs or feet, please seek advice prior to using them. If you have no circulatory problems and your legs and feet are generally healthy, using flights socks is unlikely to do any harm.
- **How can I find out if my brand of insulin is available in my destination?**  
Contacting the insulin manufacturer is the best way to obtain this information.
  - Eli Lilly & Company, telephone: 01256 315000
  - Novo Nordisk Ltd, telephone: 0845 6005055
  - Sanofi-Aventis, telephone: 01483 505515
  - Wockhardt UK Ltd, telephone: 01978 661261

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Diabetes Centre, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 725789 or email [tara.kadis@nhs.net](mailto:tara.kadis@nhs.net).

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.PatientExperienceTeam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.PatientExperienceTeam@nhs.net).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

如果你要求本資 不同的 或 式提供 , 電  
或發電

Jeżeli niniejsze informacje potrzebne są w innym języku lub formacie, należy zadzwonić lub wysłać wiadomość e-mail

Bu bilgileri değişik bir lisanda ya da formatta istiyorsanız lütfen telefon ediniz ya da e-posta gönderiniz

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