

Travel advice for people with cystic fibrosis

**Adult Cystic Fibrosis Service (Ward 54)
Western General Hospital
Crewe Road South
Edinburgh
EH4 2XU
Tel: 0131 537 1762**

Contents

• Health care abroad	1
• Letter for customs (in case of illness).....	1
• Oxygen	2
• Insurance	2
• Medication before you go	3
• Vaccination	4
• Medication on the flight	4
• Diabetes (special considerations)	5
• Storage of insulin	5
• Contacts	5
• Medication when you are away	6
• Salt tablets	6
• Nebulisers	6
• Storage of medication	7
• Medical problems while abroad (dehydration)	7
• Sunburn/heatstroke.....	7
• Infection	8
• First aid	8
• Keep all your emergency numbers handy	8

Medical problems when abroad (Infection)

- We can supply you with stand-by oral antibiotics for you to take away if you think you may need them for your chest
- Consider what medical services are available at your destination
- There are lists of CF centres around the world, which we can check for you
- If you need to take your antibiotics when away you should inform the clinic when you return so you can be reviewed
- If you don't feel better after a few days of taking your antibiotics then you should be seen by a doctor soon.

First aid

- It is sensible to take a small first aid kit away with you including plasters, oral rehydration powders, sterilization tablets, antihistamines and antiseptic.

Keep all your emergency numbers handy, including;

- Your insurance company
- Travel operator/ representative
- Local emergency services
- British consulate in the area, available from the FCO website: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/>. They also give good health advice on each country in the world
- Names and details of friends and family with your passport
- Keep all receipts, proofs of purchase, price tags or labels if you have to pay for any medical treatment when you are away so that you may claim this back.

Travel advice for people with cystic fibrosis (CF)

Planning your holiday well in advance can help ensure that you have a carefree, relaxing time when you are away. Please inform the CF team if you are thinking of going away so that we can arrange anything you require well in advance.

Health care abroad

- Not all countries have as good healthcare as we do back home
- Please think about where you are going and consider how you would access help if you need it
- Avoid remote places without a guide who can get you help, if possible
- We can give you details of CF centres abroad nearest to where you will be - please ask us if you need to know
- Please see www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk for advice on specific destinations and travelling with a medical condition.

Letter for customs (in case of illness)

- Please take a letter from the CF unit, detailing your condition, medication, allergies, equipment and what you need in an emergency / illness
- This will aid your transfer through customs and should you require medical treatment abroad
- Please give us notice to prepare this for you.

Oxygen

- Some people with CF may need oxygen on a flight
- A test can be arranged to check if you will require this. Please ask at clinic for this to be arranged
- Please check with your airline if they will provide oxygen before you book. They may charge you to supply oxygen; or you may be able to take your own
- Oxygen concentrators may be able to be arranged if required at your destination. There may be a charge for this. Please ask at clinic for more details.

Insurance

- It is essential that you have adequate travel insurance, including cover for existing medical conditions such as CF
- You will be liable for any medical costs if you require treatment when abroad and you don't have insurance. This could be thousands of pounds
- It's best to get group insurance which covers return of your whole group if you need to be brought back to the UK for medical reasons
- The CF Trust website has information about special cover at: **www.cftrust.org.uk/aboutcf/livingwithcf/travel/travelinsurance**
- For travel within the EU make sure you take your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This entitles you to free or reduced cost medical care within the EU. But you still require your own insurance in addition to this. This is available via their website: **www.ehic.org.uk**; or telephone: **0745 606 2030**; or at the Post Office.

Medical problems when abroad (Dehydration)

Dehydration can cause more problems for you because of CF, so replacing your fluids properly is very important.

- Avoid too much alcohol or caffeine
- Travellers diarrhoea is common, especially in tropical countries. If you get a stomach bug when you are away then it is even more important to maintain adequate fluid and carbohydrate intake (check blood sugars if diabetic and adjust insulin). Seek medical help if this does not clear up in a couple of days
- Try to stick to your usual meal times and take your usual enzymes with food (e.g. Creon or Pancrex V)
- Try to maintain good fluid intake when in hot climates, especially if you are prone to constipation / DIOs. Aim for about 3 litres per day
- Avoid drinking lots of water without replacing your salts as this can be dangerous
- Ask about salt tablets or oral rehydration powders at the clinic.

Medical problems when abroad (Sunburn / heatstroke)

Several antibiotics can make your skin more sensitive to the sun. These include: levofloxacin, doxycycline, minocycline and co-trimoxazole.

- If you have to take any of these when you are abroad then avoid direct sunlight, cover up and wear sunblock (SPF 50 or above) on exposed areas of skin
- Take it easy for the first few days in the sun to allow your body to acclimatise to the heat
- Cover up with hats, t-shirts or long-sleeved shirts. Use sun block or sunscreen SPF 15 and above, also avoid mid-day sun (11am - 3pm) and sit in the shade.

Useful contacts

- www.diabetes-travel.co.uk
- www.diabetes.org.uk/scotland

Nebulisers

- These should be continued when on holiday
- Portable nebulisers are available to borrow from the clinic if you don't have one already
- They should be carried as hand luggage along with nebulised medication
- Nebulisers that plug in may not be able to be used with the voltage settings abroad and are bulky to carry.

Storage of medication

- Try to store medication in a cool place out of direct sunlight
- Enzymes are not stable in the heat and can degrade well before their expiry date; keep them cool, even in the fridge to ensure that they will still work for you
- Tobi - is stable for 1 month out of the fridge
- DNase should be stored in a refrigerator. The airline may be able to store this in their fridge during the flight, or use a cool pack. You can ask the people in charge of where you are staying to keep in their fridge if you don't have access to one. Make sure your fridge is working well and avoid freezing temperatures below 2°C

Medication before you go

- Order extra supplies of your regular medication, well in advance, to cover approximately double the time you are away
- You may wish a course of antibiotics before you go away to ensure you are at your best when you are on holiday
- Please allow plenty of time to get this arranged before you go and let us know in advance so we can arrange this for you
- We can also give you a supply of antibiotics to take away with you, just in case you need them when abroad.

The travel clinic at the Western General offers advice, vaccination, malaria prevention medication and altitude sickness advice at reasonable cost.

Contact

Ward 41 / Travel Clinic, Yellow Fever Specialist Centre
Regional Infectious Disease Unit
Western General Hospital
Crewe Road South
Edinburgh, EH4 2XU
Tel: 0131 537 2822

You can leave a message to receive basic advice over the phone or make an appointment to speak to a qualified travel advisor who can provide vaccines and medication.

Vaccinations

- Please check if you require these well in advance
- You can get advice from the GP, community pharmacy or travel clinic
- If you have had a transplant then please check with the CF clinic before getting any vaccines as some are not suitable for you e.g. yellow fever vaccine
- Some countries require a yellow fever vaccine certificate for entry. An exemption certificate can be obtained from a travel clinic, but this neither protects you from yellow fever infection, nor guarantees you onward travel into other countries. Specialist advice should be sought about the appropriateness of travel to some areas of South Africa and South America
- Make sure you have your usual Flu vaccine every year.

Malaria prophylaxis

- You should take this as advised by your GP, community pharmacist, or travel clinic, if you are travelling to an area where malaria is endemic
- Please let the CF clinic know what you have been advised to take before you pay for them, so we can check they are right for you.

Medication on the flight

- Check with your airline before you travel for up to date information about medication on flight
- Keep your medical letter with you when checking in and going through customs so that you can present it when required
- Please be aware of current baggage restrictions. Liquids should be in volumes of less than 100ml and in a clear plastic bag
- Any liquids over 100mls may require prior approval by the airline and airport with a supporting letter from the clinic
- You can take as many tablets as you require

- Try to take all medication as hand luggage and take more than you need in case you are delayed getting home
- Try to avoid checking medication in to the hold, as it can become frozen. This can be a problem medication in liquid form such as insulin or Pulmozyme ('DNase', dornase alpha) Check with the airline before you go.

Diabetes (special considerations)

- Please contact your local diabetes team for advice before you go. For long-haul flights, make an appointment well in advance to discuss time differences and taking your insulin.

Storage of insulin

- Insulin is stable for 1 month at room temperature
- Store spare insulin in a fridge on holiday if possible
- Avoid large fluctuations in temperature e.g. in very hot climates keep in fridge and avoid freezing temperatures below 2°C
- Medical grade cool packs which are easy to use are available from a company called Frio. Their website is at: www.friouk.com/
- Ensure that you take your monitoring equipment and continue to monitor your blood sugars when away
- Ensure you have plenty of snacks and a rapid acting glucose source (e.g. glucose tablets or non-diet fizzy drink) available when away and during the flight
- Remember you can ask for extra bread or fruit on the flight
- Carry an ID bracelet, diabetes card or medical letter with you at all times.