



## TRAVELLING AND **DIABETES**

OUT AND ABOUT, SAFELY AND IN GOOD SHAPE

Living as normal as possible

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*Lilly* | DIABETES

Discovering unknown countries, just basking in the sun and leaving everyday life behind, or jetting halfway around the world for business reasons - these are travel plans that no longer pose a problem, even for people with diabetes. A prerequisite is that you plan your trip with foresight and observe some important points during organisation.

Different climate zones, unfamiliar foods and time differences can disrupt your metabolism and your therapy routine. This is especially true for people who are treated with insulin. Discuss your travel plans with your practice team well in advance of your trip. They will advise you on how to prepare yourself thoroughly and whether you need to adapt your diabetes therapy to conditions during your holiday.

## PLANNING WITH FORESIGHT

### Vaccinations

Before you embark on your trip, discuss with your doctor what vaccinations are required for your destination and check your current vaccination status. If necessary, have your vaccinations against tetanus, diphtheria and polio boosted in good time. A hepatitis B vaccination may also make sense for diabetes patients.

### Insurance

As a diabetes patient, check with your health insurance company about insurance cover abroad. It may be advisable to take out an additional

private travel health insurance. Statutory health insurance companies do not pay for transport from the holiday destination back home for medical reasons. Therefore return transport insurance can also prove useful.

Make sure that diabetes and possible secondary disorders are included in the compulsory benefits.

### Prescriptions

Find out in advance whether your medicines are available at your travel destination and whether they require a prescription. Ask your doctor for prescriptions for all medications you



will need during your trip. Also be sure to take a list of all the medicines you are currently taking with you and the corresponding package inserts. That way you will have all the information at the ready to ensure that you are given the same or a comparable preparation.

### Emergency ID card

For emergencies, carry an ID card with you that identifies you as a diabetes patient. In case of a severe hypoglycaemic event, for example, this ensures rapid help from others. Ideally, you should have a diabetic ID card in the respective national

language with you. You can download a diabetic emergency ID card at [www.lilly-diabetes.de](http://www.lilly-diabetes.de).

### Medical certificate

At the end of this brochure you will find a certificate you should have filled out and signed by your doctor before your trip. You can show the certificate at the security check at the airport or at customs if you are asked about the needle, pen, blood glucose meter or insulin. It is also useful to learn the main phrases in the local language: "I have diabetes", "I need sugar" and "I need a doctor".

## Start with sufficient supplies    Packaging insulin securely

Even with a prescription, obtaining medicines, syringes and other diabetes accessories can be difficult, especially outside Europe. It is therefore important that you always have a supply of your medication and monitoring materials with you when you travel. Take with you at least two to three times the amount you expect to need. You should distribute your medication and other utensils over several pieces of luggage in case a suitcase gets lost.

Extreme temperature fluctuations can impair the effectiveness of insulin. As a rule, a temperature of 25°C should therefore not be exceeded. Store your insulin in a cooling bag in hot climates, but do not store it directly next to the freezer packs. Make sure the insulin is stored within the recommended temperature range - between two and eight degrees Celsius. Not all cooling bags meet these requirements, it is best to consult your pharmacist. If the temperatures are too low, there is a risk that the insulin solution or suspension will freeze. This can destroy the effectiveness of the insulin.



Insulin cartridges are not available everywhere in the world. As a precaution, take additional cartridges of each type of insulin you need with you as well as syringes.

If you need to buy insulin abroad and it is only available in a different concentration than the insulin you normally use, use the syringe that corresponds to the respective concentration. This way you will get the same dose per injection.



The performance of blood glucose meters and test strips may be affected by hot and cold temperatures. For more information, read the manual of your glucose meter.

## SAFE ARRIVAL BY CAR

During longer car journeys the most important thing is to prevent hypoglycaemia at the wheel. Always check your blood glucose before starting your journey. Document the measured values well so that a metabolic imbalance can be ruled out as the cause should an accident occur.

**You should take a break every two hours to check your blood glucose** and have a snack between meals if necessary. For treatment of mild hypoglycaemia carry readily absorbable carbohydrates (dextrose or sweetened drinks) in your hand luggage. Also allow for travel delays caused by traffic jams. Keep your diabetes utensils handy, but never leave them in the glove compartment or exposed to sunlight under the front or rear windscreen to protect them against overheating. On longer car journeys they should be stored in a cooling bag as well. At the first sign of hypoglycaemia, stop immediately on the hard shoulder and stop the engine. Eat or drink fast-acting carbohydrates and do not continue your trip until your blood glucose has returned to normal. Passengers should be informed in advance how they can help in an emergency, including how to administer glucagon if necessary.

### *Light food to go:*

- ✓ Apples, muesli bars, crispbread or dry wholemeal biscuits (good shelf life and can be transported unrefrigerated)
  - ✓ Wholemeal sandwiches, fresh fruit, salads with yoghurt dressing and slices of raw carrots or bell peppers in keep-fresh containers
  - ✓ Sufficient beverages such as mineral water, tea or coffee
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## EVERYTHING WITHIN REACH ON THE PLANE

During air travel, flight stress and hours of sitting can lead to considerable fluctuations in blood glucose levels. Therefore **blood glucose checks are necessary every three hours at the latest.**

The necessary test utensils, such as insulin and oral diabetes medication, snacks or carbohydrates against hypoglycaemia, should be carried in sufficient quantities in your hand luggage. Here, too, you should be prepared for delays and therefore carry more medication in your hand luggage than you actually need.

A vegetarian menu is particularly suitable as an on-board meal, as it usually contains sufficient amounts of complex carbohydrates. If you are injecting insulin, take possible delays into account and adjust the insulin dose accordingly. Also inform your flight attendant that you have diabetes. This ensures that you get something to eat as soon as possible if meals are delayed. Avoid alcohol during the flight as this can increase the risk of hypoglycaemia.

Wearers of insulin pumps should remember the necessary accessories and spare batteries. Consider taking a glucagon syringe with you. The holiday supply of insulin must not be transported in the main luggage, as temperatures in the cargo hold are below zero. Strict regulations apply to liquids and dangerous objects in hand luggage.

To avoid unexpected complications during airport security checks, patients treated with insulin or GLP-1 analogues should carry a medical certificate. This should certify the necessity of carrying medication in liquid form, injection needles and syringes.



### **Blood glucose monitoring**

Measure blood glucose every three hours (during air travel)

## ATTENTION IN CASE OF TIME DIFFERENCES

You will need to adjust the insulin dose when planning intercontinental flights with a time difference. Ask your doctor or diabetes counsellor in good time before you start your journey on how to proceed.

### **General rules:**



For flights from east to west with a time gain: bridge additional hours with small doses of short-term insulin or additional small doses of NPH insulin.



On flights from west to east with a loss of time (the travel day is shortened) the insulin requirement is reduced: the dose of basal insulin must therefore be reduced if necessary, and short-term insulin is used as usual before meals.

## EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT ON HOLIDAY

### More frequent monitoring of blood glucose

Travel stress, an unfamiliar climate, more exercise and foreign food cause blood glucose levels to fluctuate more strongly. You should therefore check your blood glucose more often than usual when you travel. If you are travelling outside Europe, it may be advisable to take a second glucose meter with you - and remember to take along spare batteries. Protect the glucose meter and test strips from extreme temperatures and excessive humidity.

### More physical exercise

Like everyone else, diabetics are often more active than usual when travelling. If medication remains at the same level, increased physical activity poses a risk of hypoglycaemia. This can be compensated by increased carbohydrate intake or a reduction in the dose of insulin and/or sulphonyl urea. Please also note that the physical response to insulin is increased at high temperatures, so that blood glucose levels decline faster. Here as well, increased self-monitoring of blood glucose is important.

### Tempting exotic pleasures

In foreign countries, the influence of unfamiliar foods on blood glucose is difficult to predict. Here it makes sense to check your blood glucose one to two hours after a meal. Especially for insulin patients, it is helpful to obtain information in advance on local dishes and their carbohydrate content through appropriate travel guides or country-specific cookbooks. If you are unfamiliar with the dishes, do not hesitate to ask what they are prepared from when in doubt. You can often derive the carbohydrate content of foreign dishes from well-known foods: bulgur, for example, has the same carbohydrate content as wheat. Depending on the shopping possibilities at your holiday destination, you should remember to bring important food with you from home, such as wholemeal bread or the usual artificial sweetener. Do not forget to drink more in warmer countries than at home.



### Illnesses

Do not hesitate to consult a doctor if you suffer from an illness. Diarrhoea and feverish infections can lead to severe metabolic imbalances. Even if you eat almost nothing at all, it is important not to do without your blood glucose-lowering medication entirely. If you are a patient on insulin, your body also needs basal insulin when you are hungry, since otherwise diabetic ketoacidosis could develop. If in doubt, injecting a more controllable, short-acting insulin can be of advantage as it does not lead to hypoglycaemia quite so readily. Clarify in advance with your diabetes team what to do in case of diarrhoea or stomach complaints.

### Pay attention to your feet

If you suffer from sensory disturbances on your feet, you should be particularly careful when taking a walk along the beach. You may not notice the hot temperatures of the sand or glass shards and sharp-edged mussel shells, so there is an increased risk of injury. It is therefore better not to walk barefoot on the beach. If you are planning a hiking holiday, remember to wear comfortable cotton socks and shoes without seams to avoid pressure points. Check your feet every evening for injuries or pressure sores.



### *Diabetes and travelling:*

Diabetes is not a reason to stay at home. However, especially if you inject insulin, some careful preparation is required before travelling. If you plan ahead, nothing stands in the way of a relaxed and safe holiday.

- ✓ On the internet you will find other helpful sites for preparation such as the diabetes interpreter on the website of German Diabetes Aid [www.Diabetesde.org](http://www.Diabetesde.org)

### References

Mehnert, Hellmut. Gut beraten können Diabetiker heute überall hin reisen. Ärzte Zeitung Issue 56; 27. 03.2012: 13 Schmeisl, Gerhard-W. Schulungsbuch für Diabetiker. 7th Edition 2011, Elsevier GmbH Munich, 173 -177

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## TRAVEL CHECKLIST FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

### What you must never forget.

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#### *Medicines and injection accessories:*

- ✓ Insulin pens/other ready-to-use pens (spare pen)
- ✓ Insulin cartridges/vials (double quantity)
- ✓ Blood glucose-lowering tablets (double amount)
- ✓ Injection needles (double quantity), blood glucose meter with spare batteries and test strips
- ✓ Lancing device and lancets
- ✓ Acetone test strips (for type 1 diabetes)
- ✓ Insulin pump and accessories (spare battery for the pump)
- ✓ Glucagon emergency set (for type 1 diabetes), snacks, glucose (in case of hypoglycaemia)
- ✓ Cooling bag

#### *Documents / Certificates:*

- ✓ Diabetic ID card (German/English, in the national language if needed)
- ✓ Diabetes diary
- ✓ Medical certificate for air travel (necessity of carrying injection accessories and medication)
- ✓ Blood glucose diary
- ✓ International health insurance
- ✓ Carbohydrate exchange table
- ✓ Blood glucose conversion table (mg/dl in mmol/l)
- ✓ Package inserts for all medicines

#### *For your feet:*

- ✓ Beach footwear
- ✓ Footcare set
- ✓ Footcare cream

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Lilly Germany wishes you a pleasant journey



# MEDICAL CERTIFICATE

## MEDICAL CERTIFICATE

Name of the patient

Date of birth

Place of residence

is diabetic.

(In order to ensure correct therapy, the following should be carried when travelling)

- Insulin cartridges/vial
- Insulin hypodermic syringe
- Insulin hypodermic pen
- Insulin pump with accessories
- Glucagon Emergency Kit
- Blood glucose meter
- Lancets with pricking device)
- Needles
- Other

Doctor

Date

Doctor's signature/stamp