

Med E-mail July 2015 : Going on holiday with medicines

As the summer holiday season approaches, practices may be asked for information about taking medicines abroad: Patients should be advised to:

- Take enough of their prescription medication to last the whole trip and carry some spares in case of emergencies or if their stay is extended. This includes needles, syringes, test strips etc.
- Always carry medication in hand luggage or on their person. Never put in checked-in baggage in case the bag is lost or delayed by the airline.
 - Airport security restrictions currently allow patients to take medically necessary liquids, associated supplies such as syringes or auto-injectors, and ice packs to keep the liquids at the proper temperature
 - Patients may be questioned at airport security about the medication they are carrying. A letter from their doctor outlining the entitlement to the prescription medication may be helpful to show at airport security.
- Keep medication in its original packaging and keep a separate note of the (generic) name in case theirs is lost or stolen and they need to obtain more while away.
 - Patients should find out what their medicine is called in the country they are visiting so that they know what to ask for if they need to obtain more. It might have a different name overseas
- ensure their travel insurance covers the loss of prescription medication, so that they can recoup the cost if they have to pay to replace medicines that are lost or stolen
- Check that their prescription medication is legal in the country they are visiting. The travel section of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office> gives for details or contact the embassy in the country they are planning to visit to find out before they travel <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk>.
- Seek advice from the home office www.hmrc.gov.uk if they need to travel with controlled drugs. There is a limit to the quantity of controlled drugs that patients can carry while abroad. If they need to take more than the authorised amount, they will need to contact the Home Office to apply for a licence. This will take at least 10 days to obtain.
- Consider how hot or cold climates might affect medication - If patients take medicines that need to be stored in a fridge eg insulin, they should take a cool bag to store them in. They must not be put in checked in luggage -the baggage compartment is too cold and medicines may freeze and become unsuitable to use
- Be aware of changes of time zones and how this may affect when medicines are taken
- Ask their community pharmacist for any specific advice for medicines that they are prescribed