

Hints & Tips for Healthcare abroad and flying with your medical appliances and medicines.

Healthcare Abroad: Always consider health insurance if you can afford it as most policies cover transport costs back home for serious injury or illness. If travelling within the EC you can apply for the new, free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC card). Apply online www.ehic.org.uk, Call: 0845 606 2030, visit your local Post. The same website will also has information about travelling to other countries and reciprocal arrangements with non EC governments simple click on the '[Access to Healthcare Abroad](#)' link on the same page which has lots of useful information and a '[Country-by-country guide](#) to what's free and what's not! If you are travelling to unusual destinations where local customs and language may be a problem ensure you have contact details for the nearest British Embassy. You may even find it beneficial to contact the Embassy in advance to find out about any medical issues that may concern you.

Essential supplies and equipment: Take enough medicine, catheters, sheaths and drainage bags and any other equipment you cannot easily replace by walking into a high street chemist, with you in your hand luggage on the plane to last a couple of days in case you get delayed or your hold baggage gets lost. Make sure you have specific suppliers contact details with you, so if you need more supplies you don't have to chase around in a foreign country looking for UK telephone numbers. When travelling with a few people split your hold essential items between everyone's luggage, so that if one case went missing you would still be all right (make sure they are happy to do this as they will have to say they packed their own luggage at check-in). Remember to pack extra as it is likely your routines will be different such as drinking more fluids in a hot climate. Better safe than sorry, so you don't spoil the last few days of your holiday because you run out of supplies!

Aircraft cabin restrictions: Since 2006, new security restrictions have limited the amount of liquids to 100mL that you're allowed to take with you, into the cabin of an aeroplane. There is an exception for essential medicines that allows containers with more than 100ml of liquid, but you may be asked to taste each medicine at security. Always check with the airline, sometimes they can arrange for your cases to be stored in a separate pressurised hold as they are important medical supplies. Get a doctor's letter stating your name and date of birth and explaining what the medicine is for and why you need to take it into the cabin.

Travelling abroad with Catheters & other medical equipment: Many medical devices have integral fluid sachets, like catheters, that although may not individually contain more fluid than the above restrictions you will likely have quite a few with you. Ask for a 'Medical Validation Certificate or have an open letter addressed to "to whom it may concern" from your doctor stating that you use medical devices which include fluids like ISC Catheters with the integral fluid (saline solution) and that you need them to be able to empty your bladder/pass urine to avoid causing medical problems with your urinary system. A manufacturers Tutorial with diagrams showing the product and how it is used and if possible 'rubber stamped' with your GP or Chemists contact information will help non English speakers understand what the medical device is used for even if you do not know the name for in their local language.

If you are prone to Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) it may be worth asking your doctor about taking a course of Antibiotics with you, so if you do feel the symptoms of a UTI coming on you do not need to rely on local medical services to dispense medication.

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Remember some medicines and medical equipment requires you to add water to them before use. If in doubt about the local water quality use bottled water and even then boiling it may be a wise move just in case!

Happy Holidays ☺
Barry Kaighin
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