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WHEN DIABETES GOES ON VACATION



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Author: Diana Kightlinger



You're finally taking the kids to see the Eiffel Tower and Venetian Grand Canal—although on your budget, that means a summer road trip to Las Vegas. Just as you hit the Nevada border, the car weaves. You glance at your husband in the driver's seat, and he looks shaky, pale, and much too intrigued by the lane lines.

Low blood sugar! You ask him to pull over and look frantically for a container of juice or piece of hard candy.

Diabetes never takes a vacation, but that shouldn't stop you and your family. To ensure your next trip goes smoothly, work with an endocrinologist to plan a personalized regimen, says [Alex Lin, MD \(https://healthcare.utah.edu/fad/mddetail.php?physicianID=u6006011\)](https://healthcare.utah.edu/fad/mddetail.php?physicianID=u6006011),

endocrinologist with University of Utah Health's [Utah Diabetes & Endocrinology Center](http://www.uhsc.edu/utahdiabetescenter/index.php) (<http://www.uhsc.edu/utahdiabetescenter/index.php>). Take a look at the considerations below to prepare and then pack your bags.

Basics: Diabetics are more subject to illness and infection, so make sure immunizations are up-to-date, especially for international travel. Bring full information for current health status and medications, medical and travel insurance, and hospitals and embassies where you're heading.

Type of diabetes and regimen: Type 2 diabetics taking metformin can breathe a little easier, knowing low blood sugar isn't usually a concern. But Type 1 and Type 2 diabetics taking insulin must be meticulous to avoid low and high blood sugar and ketoacidosis.

Destination: Each location and duration presents particular challenges. A three-hour flight with a medical assistant on-board may be fine, but a seven-day voyage calls for a dedicated physician. Wherever you go, always take more supplies than you think you need and confirm in advance that you can store them properly.

Activities: Backpacking Kings Peak requires far different preparation than attending a conference in Denver. Intense physical activity calls for continuous glucose monitoring and prior consultation with a sports medicine doctor. But daylong meetings also means special protocols. "Usually we'll see a higher blood glucose due to changes in food and sitting throughout the day," said Dr. Lin. Get specific instructions from your doctor about adjusting your regimen to treat both high and low blood sugar.

Food and drink: Explore the destination's food options and pick restaurants with healthy and low-carb options. Limit alcohol consumption but stay hydrated to help keep blood sugar in check.

Med timing and storage: Trying to follow the usual daily routine for eating, drinking, and meds can be tough. Your doctor can help adjust med and insulin pump timing and dosage. For insulin pump users, adjust the pump time to match the local time zone. Keep insulin at the right temperature with coolers to ensure it remains effective. Insulin pens tend to be more temperature-resistant than vials.

Travel companions: To respond in a crisis, fellow travelers should know diabetes type and prescribed meds for the diabetic. "Know the symptoms of high or low glucose, how to check glucose and treat if the glucose level is too low, when to call for help, and how to use a

glucose and treat if the glucose level is too low, when to call for help, and how to use a glucagon kit,” says Dr. Lin.

Diabetes travel kit: Instead of purchasing an expensive kit, create your own with exactly what’s needed for your family member or yourself. The trip will be more relaxed and fun if you know you’re prepared with the supplies and know-how to manage any scenario.

Diabetes Travel Kit

Glucose/ketone surveillance:

- Glucometer (with extra battery), test strips, lancets, and alcohol swabs
- Continuous glucose monitor (CGM), supplies, and charger
- Blood/urine ketone test kit and strips

Hyperglycemia control (high blood sugar):

- Diabetes medications
- If applicable:
 - Insulin pump supplies (extra to cover unplanned extension or infusion set failure)
 - Insulin injection kit (insulin pen needles and syringes)
 - Insulin cooling storage kit

Hypoglycemia control (low blood sugar):

- Glucose tablet, gel, and simple carbohydrates
- Glucagon kit

Other:

- Water to avoid dehydration
- Medical bracelet and medication list, translated if needed
- Emergency contacts and information about local hospitals and embassies
- Health insurance card and travel insurance information
- First aid and personal hygiene supplies