



FACT SHEET:

Travel

Careful planning before travelling is very important when you have diabetes. To ensure you enjoy your travel and stay healthy, you need to think about several things before you travel. Having diabetes means you will need to consider your diabetes management and general health, available food choices and any special requirements during the trip and at the destination, what to pack and travel insurance.

Whether you are travelling by plane, train, boat, or car, within Australia or overseas, plan early to make sure you have everything ready before you go.

Preparing for your trip

- Talk to your doctor or diabetes nurse practitioner about your travel plans well ahead of your trip. Ask them to write you a travel letter with information that you will need including:
 - » your medical conditions
 - » your diabetes medications including dosage, how often you take them, and how to store them
 - » any other medications you take
 - » supplies and products you use to manage your diabetes such as a blood glucose meter and strips, finger pricker and lancets, insulin pen or syringes, continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) or flash glucose monitoring (Flash GM) device and insulin pump
 - » the importance of carrying your medications and diabetes supplies with you at all times
 - » if you are at risk of low blood glucose levels (also known as hypoglycaemia or a hypo), the importance of carrying hypo treatment with you at all times
 - » if you use an insulin pump or a CGM or Flash GM device, they must not be removed even when going through airport security. This is because they can be exposed to metal detectors without being damaged, but they cannot be exposed to x-rays.

- Take several printed copies of this letter. Also, have it available on an electronic device such as a smartphone or smart device. Present it at security checkpoints or medical services, if necessary.
- Discuss your sick day action plan with your doctor, diabetes nurse practitioner or diabetes educator. Prepare a sick day kit before travelling, and make sure you pack it in your carry-on luggage.

When travelling overseas

Before you travel

- Talk to your doctor or diabetes nurse practitioner about the vaccinations you might need well ahead of your trip. Ask what other medications you might need, for example something for nausea or diarrhoea.
 - If you are travelling across different time zones, ask your doctor, diabetes nurse practitioner or diabetes educator to prepare a plan for how to adjust the times and doses of your medications, including insulin.
 - Take out travel insurance for both your health and belongings. Make sure your travel insurance for accident and health cover is valid. This needs to cover both pre-existing conditions, the places you will visit and the activities you plan to do. Declare your medical conditions and check if there are any limitations for pre-existing conditions such as diabetes. If you use an insulin pump, consider insuring it as well.
 - Pack clearly written details of emergency contacts such as your next-of-kin or family member.
 - Take the phone and email details of your diabetes health professionals and of your insulin pump company, if relevant.
 - Always carry identification and emergency contacts on you and consider wearing a Medic Alert bracelet or another form of medical identification.
- If you have a smart phone, consider using an ICE (or In Case of Emergency) app. This will show your identification and emergency contact details on the home screen even when the phone is locked. Health apps are also available to store your medical information on your phone.
 - When travelling by plane, put all your diabetes supplies in your carry-on luggage, preferably split between two carry-on bags.
 - Have the contact details of relevant manufacturers and local diabetes associations in the countries you plan to visit in case you need advice on local products or services.
 - Have your travelling letter translated into the language of your destination country. Have it available on an electronic device such as a smartphone or smart device. Present it at security checkpoints or medical services, if necessary.
 - If you use an insulin pump, you need know how to convert your pump settings to insulin injections if your pump fails. You will also need to pack the equipment for your insulin injections back-up plan in case of pump failure. Have a copy of your pump settings recorded and keep it with you for easy reference. Some insulin pump companies may lend you a spare one to take while travelling. Check with your insulin pump company.
 - If you are going away for a long period, talk to your diabetes educator about your NDSS allowance for supplies.
 - Check that your medications and diabetes supplies, such as blood glucose monitoring strips, will not go out of date while you are away.
 - Make sure you have enough supplies and batteries to last the entire trip.

What to pack

- Letter from your doctor
- Prescriptions for all medications you are taking with you
- Sick day action plan and sick day kit
- Your NDSS card to prove you have diabetes
- Insulin, in a cool pack (do not freeze). It is recommended to take double the amount of insulin you would normally need for the length of your trip
- Insulin pens or syringes and needles to last for the whole trip, plus extras
- An insulin pump if you use one, plus spare batteries or charger and consumables such as inserters and lines
- Spare blood glucose meter and spare batteries or charger
- Extra lancets and spare lancing device or finger-pricker
- A blood ketone meter and in-date blood or urine ketone strips including extras, if you have type 1 diabetes or use them
- A basic first aid kit, including band aids, antiseptic and thermometer
- Travel-size sharps container with lid
- Carbohydrate (carb) snacks, such as plain biscuits, crackers or dried fruit
- Easily absorbed hypo treatment, such as glucose tablets or jellybeans if needed. Check with airlines about taking liquids on the plane if you plan to use a liquid hypo treatment
- CGM and Flash GM devices if you use one and consumables such as sensors and transmitters
- Travel insurance documents

While travelling

- Place insulin needs to be in pharmacy-labelled packaging. Each box of five needs a separate label. Store it in a cool pack in your carry-on luggage.
- If you take insulin or diabetes tablets (that can cause hypos), carry some easily absorbed carbs, such as glucose tablets or jellybeans (in case of hypo). Pack some longer-acting carbs, such as biscuits, crackers, or dried fruit. Check if you need to throw this out before going through customs at your destination.
- If you have type 1 diabetes, take glucagon with you. Make sure the glucagon is in date, in pharmacy-labelled packaging, and stored in your carry-on luggage.
- If you use an insulin pump or a CGM or Flash GM device, declare it at the security checkpoint. Inform security staff that your device must not be removed or exposed to X-rays, as stated in your doctor's letter.
- Keep track of your 'departure' time zone and 'destination' time zone. If you use an insulin pump, you will need to change the time in the pump to the local time once you arrive at your destination.
- Provide family and friends with a copy of your travel itinerary, contact details and important travel documents.
- If you use an insulin pump and CGM or Flash GM device, keep your consumables and supplies in their original packaging in your carry-on luggage.

Additional tips when flying

At the airport

- Metal detectors are safe, but insulin pumps and CGM transmitters can be damaged by x-rays in security equipment. Ask airport security staff to physically check you and your luggage rather than using the X-ray equipment. Security staff are required to respond to such a request under government agency regulations.

During the flight

- Keep your diabetes supplies where you can reach them immediately, even if the seatbelt sign is on. The best place is in the seat pocket in front of you – not under the seat or in the overhead locker.
- There is no need to order ‘diabetic’ meals. If there is not enough carb such as pasta, bread, rice, or potato served with your meal, ask for extra carb or use your packed carb snacks. Drink enough water so you can stay hydrated.
- Get as much sleep as possible but ask the cabin crew to wake you for meals.



- Always wait until your meal is in front of you before injecting insulin or oral medications that can cause hypo. For added safety, you can take your insulin halfway through the meal or immediately afterwards. If you use an insulin pump or a CGM and Flash GM device, talk to your diabetes health professionals about managing these devices during plane travel.
- Wear comfortable shoes and exercise your feet to help prevent swelling. Try to move around the cabin as often as you can. Walking up and down the aisle will assist circulation and help to keep your blood glucose levels within your target range.

What if something goes wrong while you are away?

- Plan carefully to reduce the risk of things going wrong. If something does go wrong, do not panic. Seek medical assistance if required, ideally with advice from your travel insurer.
- If you are travelling overseas, consider registering your travel plans with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The department can then contact you or your family in the event of an emergency.



More information and support

- Go to [ndss.com.au](https://www.ndss.com.au) to search for the ‘Blood glucose monitoring’, ‘Managing hypoglycaemia’, ‘Living with type 2 diabetes – what to do when you are sick’ or ‘Living with type 1 diabetes – what to do when you are sick’, ‘Continuous glucose monitoring’, ‘Flash glucose monitoring’ and other fact sheets.
- Go to [ndss.com.au](https://www.ndss.com.au) to download the ‘Diabetes and driving’ booklet or watch the ‘Diabetes and driving’ video.
- Go to [adea.com.au](https://www.adea.com.au) to download separate guides and sick day action plans for people with type 1 diabetes who use insulin injections and those who use an insulin pump and for people type 2 diabetes who use insulin and those who do not to manage their diabetes.
- Go to [smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au) for the latest information and advice to stay safe overseas.

