

Ask the Pharmacist

Medication safety tips for travelers

The key to healthy, fun traveling is to plan ahead. This is particularly true if you're taking medications, which, though meant to keep you well, can actually pose health risks due to travel and exposure to sun. Try these tips:

Always keep your medications on you.

Medications should always be kept in carry-on luggage to avoid the possibility of getting lost with checked baggage. Also, the extreme temperatures checked baggage are exposed to may decrease the effectiveness of some medication.

According to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), air travelers may now carry liquids, gels and aerosols in their carry-on bag when going through security checkpoints. The TSA's "3-1-1" guidelines state:

- All liquids, gels and aerosols must be in three-ounce or smaller containers. Larger containers that are half-full or toothpaste tubes rolled up are not allowed. **Each container must be three ounces or smaller.**
- All liquids, gels and aerosols must be placed in a single, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag. Gallon-size bags or bags that are not zip-top such as fold-over sandwich bags are not allowed. **Each traveler can use only one, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag.**
- Travelers must remove their quart-sized plastic, zip-top bag from their carry-on and place it in a bin or on the conveyor belt for X-ray screening. X-raying separately will allow TSA security officers to more easily examine the declared items.¹

For more information, visit the TSA website at <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

Always keep a list of your medications.

On the list, be sure to include specifics, such as the doses and why you take each medication.

Consider time zone changes.

If you're traveling to a different time zone, ask your pharmacist about how to adjust your dosing schedule so you can avoid missing doses. The adjustment will vary according to the type of medication.

Carry prescriptions in their original containers.

It may cause confusion if they're kept in unlabeled containers or bags.

Prepare for weather changes.

Store medication needing refrigeration in an insulated bag with a cold pack.

In addition to traveling, leisure plans often include getting back to nature. Here are some tips to remember when spending time in the great outdoors:

Take precautions with sun-sensitive medications.

Some medications, such as benzoyl peroxide and ibuprofen, can cause a reaction when skin is exposed to the sun. Medications usually include instructions that will tell you to wear sunscreen or to stay out of the sun altogether.

Treating poison ivy and other rashes.

Calamine lotion or hydrocortisone may be helpful in stopping the itch. In severe cases, doctors may suggest taking an oral steroid.

Know the symptoms of heat exhaustion.

They include dizziness, sweating, headache and nausea. Stay hydrated. During the hottest time of day, wear lightweight

clothing and refrain from strenuous activities. It's especially important for seniors to stay out of intense heat.

For more information on traveling with medications, visit medco.com[®].

¹ Transportation Security Administration, "Make Your Trip Better Using 3-1-1." Available at: <http://www.tsa.gov/311/index.shtm>.