



More Wit and Wisdom for kids with diabetes  
(and their parents)

# On the Go... with Diabetes

You can travel wherever you want. The big city or small towns. Rafting on rivers, hiking canyons, backpacking in National Parks, or over a mountain. Canoe trips on lakes, or camel treks across the desert. Anywhere you want to travel, you can. As long as you remember one thing: your diabetes goes with you.

## **Before You Take the First Step**

The planning you do before traveling can make the difference between a great adventure and a total flop. How to get there, where to stay, what to wear, and how much money to take all depend on where you're going. But your diabetes doesn't really care if you end up in a city or on a mountain or on the ocean. It still requires care.

So, a trip to your doctor's office is a good way to begin your journey. A complete check-up can make sure you are healthy enough to travel and your diabetes is under control. While you are at the doctor's, ask for two pieces of paper to take with you on your trip:

#1 A letter explaining that you have diabetes and the medicine and supplies you need to take care of yourself.

#2 A prescription for insulin, supplies, and other medication you take. This is in case of an emergency and will be important if you have traveled to a place with different laws about filling prescriptions

While you are at the doctor's, it's a good idea to talk to your health care team about the changes you may need to make in your eating schedule and your injections if you cross time zones. Traveling to the west can give you extra hours in a day but heading east will shorten your day.

## **Clothes, Medicine, and Much More**

Which clothes you pack will depend on where you are going, what you will be doing once you get there, and how many things you have to take just because they are your very favorites.

But when you're packing, don't forget your feet. The shoes and socks you wear can avoid problems that go along with diabetes. Be sure you have good-fitting shoes and soft-cushy socks. Avoiding blisters and other injuries to your feet is very important. Every day, check for blisters or sore areas that you need to take care of.

A good traveling rule for people with diabetes is to pack at least twice as much medication and supplies as you think you need. And keep at least half of it with you all the time. You can use a backpack or a carry-on bag to keep your supplies with you. Pack this bag with:

- ★ Enough insulin and syringes for the trip;
- ★ Your glucose meter with extra batteries and plenty of test strips;
- ★ Supplies to treat low blood sugars such as glucose tablets or gel;
- ★ Snacks such as peanut butter or cheese crackers (These snacks might become a meal if the next restaurant is too far away.);
- ★ The letter and prescription from your doctor;
- ★ Other medications such as Glucagon, medicine for diarrhea, medicine for upset stomach, antibiotic ointment;
- ★ Medicine for boredom such as a game or book or puzzle.

Insulin doesn't have to be refrigerated but you should keep it in a cool, dry place where it won't break. If you are traveling in a car, don't put it in the trunk or the glove compartment or any other little stow-away place where it might be left to get hot or freeze.

One more thing to pack -- but not in your suitcase or backpack. This gets packed on your body. It's your medical ID. Put it on and leave it on. If it breaks or falls off and gets lost, buy another one. Right away.

### **Are We There Yet?**

When you're traveling, all the usual day-to-day schedules and eating habits often fly out the window. So it is easy to eat too much and do too much. Here are some ideas to help manage your diabetes while you are away from home:

- ★ Do blood checks often. Besides the change in diet, the excitement of whatever you're doing can cause your blood sugars to go haywire. If you check often, you can make adjustments in what you eat, the exercise you get, and in your insulin dosage.
- ★ Keep track of what you eat. One of the fun things about traveling is trying new and different foods. But if a new food upsets your diabetes control, it will be good to remember what effect it has so you can make adjustments for it the next time you want to eat it.

Be aware of the change in how active you are. Some trips are lazy, relaxing weekends in a lounge chair at the beach and you may not get your usual amount of exercise. If you're missing your daily soccer practices and not getting much other exercise, you will need to adjust the amounts of food and insulin you take in. If you take a trip full of activity -- hiking, biking, swimming, and canoeing -- you'll probably need to make different kinds of adjustments. Do plenty of blood

checks and keep plenty of snacks handy.

### **Outta This World!**

Sometimes when you travel out of the country, you feel like you are in another world. Because you are. You might hear Chinese or Greek or French. You might find out that the normal serving time for dinner isn't until 9:00p.m. You might have a seat on a bus next to a woman holding a chicken. A live one. With feathers. These kinds of things just add to the excitement of traveling in another country. But they can also add to the stress.

If you plan to travel to a country where you don't speak the language well, it is wise to learn (and write down) a few phrases to help you deal with your diabetes if you need to. In the language of the country where you will be traveling, learn to say "I have diabetes." "I need food, sugar, or orange juice." "I need a pharmacy or doctor." And the all-important, "Where is the bathroom?"

Before you leave, your doctor, travel agent, or the local American Diabetes Association may be able to give you the name of an English-speaking doctor or clinic in the area you will be traveling. Having this information and knowing a few important phrases can make your travels less stressful.

### **All Aboard!**

So. Where DO you want to go? To Aunt Lydia's in Madrid, to the top of Pike's Peak with your dad, or summer camp by yourself? The answer is entirely up to you (and your parents, of course).

Remember, that with a little planning, there's nowhere you can't go just because you have diabetes. Every day, people with diabetes set out for journeys big and small. And everywhere you go,

there will be someone like you who has diabetes. So dream a little, spin the globe, and take your diabetes on a wonderful trip.

### **To Learn More:**

- ★ **Wizdom:** If you don't already have it, order the American Diabetes Association Wizdom™ kit for your family. They're free to kids with diabetes and are available by calling us at 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383).
- ★ **Magazines:** Diabetes Forecast is a monthly magazine published by the ADA for people with diabetes and their families. It's free to members of the American Diabetes Association Pick up a copy at your local bookstore, or become an ADA member by calling us at 1-800-DIABETES.
- ★ **Books:** The Diabetes Travel Guide, by Davida F. Kruger, MSN, RN, CS, CDE is available from your American Diabetes Association. Log on at <http://store.diabetes.org> to browse or purchase these or any of our other great books.
- ★ This piece is one in a series about kids and diabetes. We have titles about school, family, discrimination, and more. Download them by logging on to [www.diabetes.org/wizdom/download/pod.asp](http://www.diabetes.org/wizdom/download/pod.asp)
- ★ For more information on kids and diabetes, log onto our Web site at <http://www.diabetes.org/wizdom/>
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