



Talk With Your Doctor Before You Leave



Congenital heart disease should not keep you from enjoying travel. Some planning can help reduce travel stress and help you be prepared for an emergency. Talk with members of your Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD) team **before** you make your final plans.

- Talk about your health issues such as symptoms, heart rhythm issues, device checks or warfarin therapy adjustments.
- Understand what you need to avoid or cannot do (such as extreme sports).
- Find out what kind of medical care is available where you are traveling.
- Ask your doctor for a letter detailing your medical history (including your surgery history) and medicines. Or, get a copy of your last clinic visit note. This may help if you need to verify your medicines or your implanted device (if you have one). Make a few copies.
- Wear or carry medical identification. (See page 2.)
- Talk with your doctor about how to get medicine refills before you leave.
- Know how to get emergency refills where you are traveling.

preparing to travel

Plan ahead! Your adult congenital heart disease (ACHD) team can help.

- Know how to contact your doctor and ACHD team.
- Be current on your immunizations.
- Tell family and friends where you are going. Give them hotel and travel information.
- Take your medicines, a copy of your medicine list, and the contact info for your pharmacy.
- Take your insurance card.
- Have money or credit cards.

- ❑ Find out if you have special guidelines when traveling by airplane, car, boat, bus or train. This includes exercises to avoid deep vein thrombosis (blood clots) or getting through security.

Travel Insurance: the Details

- When trying to decide on travel insurance, think about your destination, budget, heart condition, risks and your history of needing emergency care in the last calendar year.
- Make sure you have good coverage in case of emergency. Read the fine print.
- Make sure your insurance plan lets you cancel your travel plans for **any** medical reason.
- Make sure your plan covers: lost baggage, medicine, medical evaluation and emergency transportation to a hospital.



Have a Medical Bracelet or ID Card

It is important to wear or carry some form of medical identification.

This ID may be needed in a life-saving emergency, especially when you are away from home and your medical records are not handy.

If you need to buy a medical bracelet or necklace, go to medicalert.org to get started. Your ACHD team recommends you get one before you travel.

What to Think About When Deciding Where to Go

Talk with your doctor about your travel limits or restrictions.

- Warm weather and sunshine puts you at an increased risk for dehydration and low blood pressure. This can be dangerous if you take medicine for your blood pressure or an abnormal heart rhythm. Drink lots of water if you travel to a warm spot.
- Mountainous areas and high altitudes put you at risk for shortness of breath and low oxygen levels. This can be dangerous if you normally have low oxygen levels or if you have high blood pressure in your lungs. Do not overdo it and slow down.
- Remote areas will have limited medical care. You may not be able to get the care you need when you need it.
- Follow your ACHD team's recommendations for extreme sports (such as skiing, sky diving and scuba). This can be dangerous if you take medicine that may have bleeding risks (such as anticoagulants).

Go to the Adult Congenital Heart Association website at achaheart.org and check out the travel directory.

