

# Planning a Trip?

A useful travel guide for individuals living with primary immunodeficiency disease (PID)



Traveling with primary immunodeficiency disease can be difficult. The information and tips provided in this guide are intended to help with your travel preparations and to make them less stressful.

**A handy Travel Planning Checklist is provided at the end of this brochure.**



## Travelling with primary immunodeficiency disease (PID)

For someone with PID, the idea of travelling can seem to be a daunting task. But there is nothing to stop anyone affected by PID from going on a holiday, especially if you are well-prepared and take appropriate precautions.

These tips will help you prepare for your trip and hopefully make it a little less stressful. We also recommend sharing your plans with your healthcare team well in advance of leaving.

No matter what the destination, it helps to plan ahead to ensure that everything goes smoothly.



## Before you leave

### 1. Planning and scheduling ahead – an important first step is consulting with your healthcare team

Start your travel planning several months before your departure date. Talk to your healthcare team about:

- whether the destination you have in mind is a good choice for you
- what extra precautions you may need to take
- advice/suggestions about vaccinations, medication and emergency treatment options
- rescheduling or modifying your infusion schedule to make sure you are in good health during your trip

If you have to be away for an extended period of time, ask your doctor if you should consider finding an immunologist near your destination who may be able to treat you if needed or be available in case of emergency.

### 2. What to ask your doctor/healthcare team about your travel plans

- Are there any destinations or types of holidays that I should avoid?
- What precautions should I take before visiting the destination I have in mind?
- What about the duration of my trip, does it sound okay?
- Do I need to make any adjustments to my infusion schedule? Should I do an infusion before I leave or

immediately after returning?

- If there is an emergency while I'm traveling, who at your office should the attending doctor/nurse contact and what is the best way to do this?
- Is there an immunologist that you know of in the area I'll be traveling, should an emergency arise?
- Is there a major hospital or clinic near to my destination?

### 3. Do some research about the destination you plan to visit

When planning a vacation, it's important to consider the overall safety and potential risks of diseases or infections of your destination. Some examples may include the risk of rabies, risks from the MERS and Zika viruses. Here are two key resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> A US-headquartered organization that maintains up-to-date, global information for travelers about health concerns in other countries.
- Canadian travelers can access information concerning travelers' health and other advice on the Government of Canada website: [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca)  
You can find travel health and safety notices/advisories, plus advice on a number of topics such as content for travel toolkits or receiving medical care in other countries.

### 4. Collect and organize important health documents to bring with you

- Medical letter explaining your condition - Ask your doctor to write a letter that can be presented to foreign medical staff, explaining your (or your family member's) condition. It is essential for airport security and in case any medical problems arise while you're away.
  - Have the letter written in English and consider getting it translated into the language of the country you are visiting.
  - The letter should list all medications and medical equipment you will have to bring with you, for your immunoglobulin therapy.
  - Some vaccinations are required for entry into certain countries. The letter should identify any vaccines that you are unable to receive due to your PID.
- HCP contact information - Ensure that you carry contact information for your immunologist's office and nurses, as well as the contact numbers for your insurance company and patient support programs.
- Vaccination records. Your immunology team will know which vaccinations you might need. Take their advice otherwise you could end up paying for vaccinations that are not necessary because of your particular PID and its treatment.
- Bring additional information about your or your family's health, including healthcare records, names and dosages of medications, and extra copies of insurance cards.

## 5. Prepare a travel kit for your medicines and medical supplies

- Pack your medicines - Organize the medicines that you will be bringing with you, such as antibiotics. Speak to your doctor and get your prescriptions ready ahead of time.
  - Take note of any special instructions that the immunoglobulin product you were prescribed may have, such as inspection of vials or specific storage temperature. This information is available in the Patient Information section of the product monograph.
  - If you take a liquid oral suspension, explain to the pharmacist that you do not want the prescription made up before you travel. Make sure that you have clean sterile water to reconstitute or mix your medicines while away.
  - Pack adequate quantities of medications to last for the duration of your holiday, plus some extra in case you are delayed when travelling home.
  - **Note** - Some medicines, such as benzodiazepines, strong painkillers and some medicines that contain hormones, such as anabolic steroids, may come under 'controlled medicines' laws in some countries. Ask your travel/airline company about how to obtain more information regarding these laws for your country destination.
- Pack all of your necessary medical supplies in carry-on luggage - Carry your medicines, such as immunoglobulin

and antibiotics, in your hand luggage for easy access and in case your checked-in baggage is lost.

- Keep everything in its original packaging with the prescription labels visible for airport security.
- Take an extra copy of your prescription with you as it will be invaluable if you lose your medication or end up in a hospital.
- For rules surrounding screening of medical supplies, contact your airline company or Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.
- Bring a first aid kit with you that includes:
  - Your own supply of sterile needles and syringes
  - Antiseptic cream and wipes
  - Water sterilization tablets
  - Insect repellent and sunscreen
  - A package of bandages, gauze and dressings
  - Ask your health team for their advice about other items to bring
- Ask about travel kits - Some Ig manufacturers may offer a travel kit to help make traveling easier. To find out if there are any complimentary travel kits available, contact the manufacturer of your immunoglobulin (Ig) product, or a patient support organization.



## 6. While you are travelling – important considerations

In addition to normal illness-prevention techniques, such as frequent hand-washing and not sharing drinks with people who may be sick, you may want to take some extra precautions when traveling.

### Tips include:

- Bring extra layers of clothing – Especially in cool climates or if you will be outside for a prolonged period of time.
- Maintain good hygiene conditions to protect from infections
  - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
  - Use hand sanitizers frequently and bring antibacterial hand wipes, in case you don't have access to soap and water.
  - Clean surfaces with sanitizing wipes (airplane seat/table, hotel room surfaces/items...)
- Use mosquito repellent - to avoid mosquito-borne diseases like dengue fever or malaria that may be present in some regions. Visit the Travel Advice and Advisories section on the Government of Canada site [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca) for more information.
- Hydrate - Make sure to drink sufficient water to stay hydrated at all times, especially in hot, dry areas.
  - Drink bottled water only - Tap water in some areas can cause illness due to bacteria and different mineral content. Make sure that you buy bottled water from a reputable seller and make sure the seal has not been broken.



- Carbonated water is a good option – It is less likely to be bottled tap water and its alkaline pH helps kill bacteria.
- Do not drink well water or water from a stream - Particularly when camping, because it may have higher concentrations of bacteria, viruses or parasites.
- Get adequate rest - Make sure to rest and sleep sufficiently to recharge yourself

## 7. Maintaining a healthy diet is important, even when travelling

- Ask your doctor or nutritionist to create a balanced meal plan that is right for you (and based on foods that are available at your destination).
- People with PID are at a higher risk of infections,

therefore maintaining a healthy diet is especially important. Without proper nutrition, you are more susceptible to getting illnesses, including infections.

- If you have a gastrointestinal (or “GI”) infection while away, you might need to follow a limited diet to alleviate symptoms like diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting. In certain situations, you may need to follow a special diet temporarily until you’re well enough to eat your normal, balanced diet again.
- Additional precautions about food:
  - Be careful with buffets (such as resort destinations) - These foods have generally been uncovered for a certain amount of time and therefore can contain bacteria, especially meat that has been under a heat lamp.



- Avoid buying food from street sellers - Unpeeled fruit and vegetables, salads, raw shellfish, ice-cream and ice cubes, underdone meat and uncooked, cold or reheated foods may be contaminated.

## **8. Know your limitations – especially regarding exercise and physical activity**

- Staying physically fit (even when travelling) allows you to be in the best condition to manage your PID. Always ask your doctor first before you start a specific exercise regimen.
- People with specific primary immunodeficiencies should avoid certain kinds of exercise and activities. For example, contact sports, swimming in oceans and/or swimming in fresh water may not be recommended for some people.
  - Swim with caution, as water in swimming pools and hot tubs may pose a health risk if the water/pool is not cleaned often enough.
  - Avoid swimming in polluted seas or lakes. This can cause dysentery and respiratory infections, as well as ear, nose and throat infections. Enquire about how clean the sea and local lakes are in your destination.



## Bon voyage – have a happy, healthy and safe holiday

We hope that the information in this guide has been useful in helping you and your healthcare team in planning for your journey. If you have additional information needs, please consult the following web sites:

- Center for Disease Control (US)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) (Travelers' Health section)
- Government of Canada website for travelers  
[www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca)
- CIPO (Canadian Immunodeficient Patients Organization) [www.cipo.ca](http://www.cipo.ca)
- Association des patients immunodéficients du Québec  
[www.cipo-apiq.ca](http://www.cipo-apiq.ca)
- UK PID disease/patient association –  
[www.PIDuk.org](http://www.PIDuk.org)

## Before you leave

- **Planning and scheduling ahead: An important first step is consulting with your healthcare team**
  - Questions to ask your doctor/healthcare team about your travel plans
    - Are there destinations I should avoid?
    - What precautions should I take for visiting the destination I have in mind?
    - Is the duration of my trip OK?
    - Do I need to make adjustments to my infusion schedule?
    - Should I do an infusion before I leave or immediately after returning?
    - If there is an emergency while I'm traveling, who should the attending doctor/nurse contact and what is the best way to do this?
    - Is there an immunologist that you know of in the area should an emergency arise?
    - Is there a major hospital or clinic near my destination?
- **Do some research on the destination to check for health risks**
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):  
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>
  - Travel Health section of the Government of Canada website: [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca)
- **Collect and organize important health documents**
  - Medical letter explaining your condition for foreign medical staff, for airport security and in case any medical problems arise while you're away:
  - Written in English and translated if/as needed
  - Listing all medications and medical equipment needed for your Ig therapy.

- Identifying any vaccines that you are unable to receive due to PID.
- HCP contact information
- Vaccination records
- Health information including healthcare records, names and dosages of medications, and extra copies of insurance cards.

• **Prepare a travel kit with all your medicines**

- Pack your medicines in your carry-on for easy access
- Include all your prescriptions - ready for travel
- Pack adequate quantities to last for the duration of your holiday, plus some extra in case you are delayed
- Ask your travel/airline company for information regarding 'controlled medicines' laws for your country destination.
- Keep everything in its original packaging with the prescription labels visible for airport security.
- Take an extra copy of your prescription with you as it will be invaluable if you lose your medication or end up in a hospital.
- For rules surrounding transportation security and screening, contact Canadian Air Transport Security Authority

• **Bring a first aid kit with you that includes:**

- Your own supply of sterile needles and syringes
- Antiseptic cream and wipes
- Water sterilization tablets
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- A package of bandages, gauze and dressings
- Ask your health team for their advice about other items to bring
- Ask about product travel kits - Some Ig manufacturers may offer a travel kit for convenience

## While You're away

• **Important considerations**

- Warm clothing depending on the climate
- Good hygiene and access to clean water
- Insect Repellent
- Drinking water
  - Drink bottled water only
  - Carbonated water is a good option
  - Do not drink well water or water from a stream
- Getting the proper rest

• **Maintaining a healthy diet (even while travelling)**

- Ask your doctor or nutritionist for a meal plan based on foods that are available at your destination.
- People with PID are at a higher risk of infections so maintaining a healthy diet is especially important.
  - Be careful with buffets (such as resort destinations) - These foods can contain bacteria, especially meat that has been under a heat lamp.
  - Avoid buying food from street sellers - Unpeeled fruit and vegetables, salads, raw shellfish, ice-cream and ice cubes, underdone meat and uncooked, cold or reheated foods may be contaminated.

• **Exercise and Physical activity**

- Stay fit and healthy but know your limits
- Swim with caution - swimming pools and hot tubs may pose a health risk if the water/pool is not cleaned often enough.
- Avoid swimming in polluted seas or lakes. This can cause dysentery and respiratory infections, as well as ear, nose and throat infections. Enquire about how clean the sea and local lakes are in your destination.





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