

Allergies

Travelling with an allergy can bring extra challenges that need consideration prior to your trip.



Before Travel

If you have had severe allergic reactions in the past, arrange to see your doctor or allergy specialist ideally several months before you travel.

Consider the likelihood of being re-exposed to what causes an allergic reaction for you at your destination. For example, it is hard to avoid traces of nuts while eating local food in much of Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In many locations food may not be labelled.

If it is advisable for you to carry an adrenaline (epinephrine) self-administration device e.g. Epipen®, you should take two devices with you kept in different parts of your luggage. One should always be with you for immediate use. Be sure to carefully read the Patient Information Leaflet that comes with the prefilled syringes and ensure you are clear about how to give yourself the injection. The following website provides information and demonstration videos on the different types of adrenaline auto-injectors:

<https://www.bsaci.org/professional-resources/types-of-adrenaline-auto-injectors/>

Your doctor may also prescribe other stand-by medications such as antihistamine tablets. Check the expiry dates of your medication before you travel.

Ask your doctor for a signed letter explaining that the medication you are carrying is for your own use in the event of an allergic reaction.

Have your allergies clearly written in a wallet or in any official documents that you carry at all times.

Consider wearing a MedicAlert® bracelet. For more information visit www.medicalert.org.uk.

If you have a food allergy, contact the airline you are travelling with to make them aware and pre-order meals according to your requirements. Some airlines may on request make an announcement to other passengers about a food allergic passenger. Anaphylaxis UK have a list of airlines and their allergy policies at the bottom of this web page. Their 'Travel Checklist' is also a useful resource.

<https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/living-with-serious-allergies/travelling-with-serious-allergies/>

Be aware of local medical facilities at your destination, especially those with 24-hour Emergency Rooms in case of a severe allergic reaction, as well as the emergency telephone number. The Everbridge clinicians are happy to help in providing this information.

During travel

Make sure you carry any emergency medications with you when travelling in case you have a severe reaction during the flight. Carry your doctor's letter with you to explain why you need to carry the medications. The 100ml liquid rule for hand luggage does not apply to medication in liquid form (e.g. antihistamine in syrup form), but you may be asked for a doctor's letter as proof.

If you are travelling with a colleague, it is best to make them aware of your allergy and discuss an action plan in case any issues arise.

Inform airline staff of your allergy at every opportunity, including at check-in and boarding.

At your destination

Ensure you carry your emergency medications with you at all times.

If you are allergic to bee, wasp or other insect stings then avoid the use of perfumes or floral scents as well as brightly colored clothing. Wear effective insect repellent such as that containing 20-50% DEET.

With food allergies, it may be best not to consume street food or food that is not clearly labelled.

It is advisable to learn some useful phrases in the local language of your destination, or to write them down e.g. 'I am allergic to...' Allergy UK provide translation cards: <https://www.allergyuk.org/our-services/translation-cards/>

The first signs of a severe allergic reaction are usually large raised itchy patches on your skin, swelling of the lips or tongue, wheezing and vomiting. These symptoms may occur very suddenly or come on gradually. At the first sign of a reaction, self-administer adrenaline. If you also carry antihistamines and / or oral steroids, then these should be taken immediately after taking the adrenaline. If you have asthma and carry a reliever inhaler, this should be used to relieve any wheezing.

You should make your colleagues aware of how to use your adrenaline self-administration device in case you are unable to administer it

Travelling with an allergy can bring extra challenges that need consideration prior to your trip. Many allergies are becoming more common and can be developed at any stage of life.

Anaphylaxis is the name given to an extreme and severe allergic reaction, which affects the whole body. It typically involves an itchy rash, swelling of the lips and tongue and breathing difficulties. It is a potentially life threatening condition and requires emergency treatment.

The most common causes of anaphylaxis are insect stings, medication (especially penicillin), latex, peanuts and tree nuts, sesame seeds, fresh fruit, shellfish, milk, eggs and wheat.

For travelers, insect stings and nut allergies are usually the most important. In addition, high levels of pollution in cities such as Cairo, Mexico City, Mumbai and Lima can be a 'trigger', especially in individuals with pre-existing asthma.

If you have had a severe allergic reaction you need to carry an adrenaline (epinephrine) 'auto-injector' device.

yourself because of the allergic reaction.

If you have had the need to use your adrenaline self-administration device, then you should go immediately to the nearest recommended medical facility. Commonly symptoms can recur, and you may require further treatment with adrenaline or antihistamine.

If you have only had less severe allergic reactions in the past that cause itchy patches on your skin with no lip or tongue swelling, wheezing or vomiting, then an injection of adrenaline would usually not be required. You should however carry a supply of antihistamine tablets and take these at the first sign of any reaction. Be aware that some antihistamine tablets can make you feel drowsy so you should not drive or operate heavy machinery within a few hours of taking them.

Always call the Everbridge Assistance line if help is required with medications or any medical issues during travel.

References

Lankester, T, (2006), The Travellers Good Health Guide. London: Sheldon Press

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This factsheet has been developed for educational purposes and is correct at the time of production. It is not designed as a replacement for professional medical advice. Please consult your medical professional for any concerns or queries regarding Inflammatory Bowel Disease whilst traveling.



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