

# Flight Plan

Air travel can affect your blood sugar. Fly safely with these tips BY MICHELE COHEN MARILL

## ASK YOUR DOCTOR

How often should I check my glucose while traveling?

Are there any special adjustments I need to make if my blood sugar is high or low while I'm traveling?

How should I adjust my medication for time zone changes?

If I travel outside the United States, do I need to take any special precautions or have any other medications?



Read [Tips for Dining Out With Diabetes](#) at [WebMD.com](#).

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You dream of a vacation—spending a week on a beach, hiking in the mountains, or exploring a faraway city. If your trip involves a flight, you might wonder how type 1 diabetes will complicate the hassles of air travel. But if you plan well, diabetes doesn't have to keep you grounded.

True, flight delays and changes in routine—even the hours spent sitting rather than being active—can affect your blood sugar. You can compensate with more frequent blood-glucose testing and by keeping a handy stash of snacks and drinks, says Davida Kruger, MSN, a nurse practitioner with the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit and author of *The Diabetes Travel Guide*.

Your trip planning should include strategies to manage your diet and medications. A month or more before your flight, talk to your doctor or diabetes educator about your itinerary, including time zone changes. “I try to get people on their new schedule as quickly as possible if there’s a time change,” Kruger says. In general, traveling east across time zones will mean the day is shorter and you will need less insulin. The reverse is true when traveling west. Kruger also offers this advice for stress-free traveling.

**Pack insulin, supplies, and snacks in a carry-on bag.** Your checked luggage will be exposed to extreme temperatures in the plane’s cargo section, and it could get misplaced. People with type 1 diabetes are allowed to take more than the standard limit of 3.4 ounces of liquid per item through security. You can take as much insulin and supplies as you need.

Keep the items separate from your nonmedical liquids, with their medical labels showing. Ask your doctor or diabetes educator to give you a letter explaining the



medications and supplies you need, in case you are questioned by airport security.

**Bring backup supplies.** “I tell people to pack twice as much as they need of everything,” Kruger says. That includes an extra glucose monitor and extra batteries. If you wear a pump, bring insulin and syringes in case the pump stops working. Pack a glucagon emergency kit, which contains medicine to be mixed with liquid in a syringe in case you need to respond quickly to low blood sugar.

**Notify the security screener that you have diabetes.** You can go through a screening device with your pump or choose a private pat-down. Even if you go through a screening device, you may be asked to touch the pump and then have your hand tested for explosive residue.

If you have any problems, ask to speak to a Passenger Support Specialist, a TSA officer who has special training in assisting people with health conditions.

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