

## Asthma and travel

Whether you are taking a holiday or a work trip, you can still maintain good management of your asthma with some forward planning.

### Travel insurance

Read the fine print to make sure your travel insurance covers you for any health care costs related to pre-existing asthma. You may have to pay additional insurance for a pre-existing illness. However, it is important to ensure that you are covered for any medical treatment that you may require for your asthma while you are travelling.

### Special considerations

When you plan your trip, remember:

- Weather or temperature changes can bring on asthma symptoms, especially when the air is cold and dry.
- All beds and pillows harbour dust mites, unless they are treated with a microbial compound (for example, Ultra Fresh) which inhibits their growth. Be wary of hotels that look unclean.
- Scuba diving is dangerous for a person with asthma and should be avoided completely. Go snorkelling instead.
- Be aware that different countries and cities have different allergens, such as pollen in the air, which may trigger asthma symptoms or an allergic reaction.

### Visit your doctor before you go

Prior to taking your trip, visit your doctor for a check-up. It's important that your day-to-day asthma is under control before you leave home. Make sure your management and action plans are up to date. If you don't already know, ask your doctor about strategies to handle your asthma if it deteriorates while on your trip.

Ask your doctor to write up a report on your asthma. This report should include your medical history, the severity of your condition and what treatment you need in case of medical attention. Carry this document with you at all times, in case of an emergency. You might need to present your doctor's report to international customs officials if they question your medication.

### Your medications

It is a good idea to:

- Take a little more medication than you think you'll need, just in case.
- Always keep a supply of your medication with you in your carry bag, in case your suitcase is lost or damaged.
- Consider taking a prescription in case you lose all or some of your supplies.
- Take copies of your prescriptions with you to prove the medicine is for your own personal use.

### Equipment

A spacer device is cheap and portable, which makes it a better choice for travelling than a nebuliser. If you need a nebuliser pump, allow for different voltages and power points when travelling overseas.

You will need to make prior arrangements with the airline if you have to use your nebuliser on board the aircraft. Alternatively, you can use a foot-powered nebuliser or one that is operated by sealed dry-cell battery. Make sure you thoroughly understand how to use any unfamiliar equipment before you leave.

## Physical activity

If your asthma is normally well controlled, you should be able to go sightseeing, trekking, swimming and generally enjoy any other leisure activity you wish. If your asthma is manageable at sea level, then you should have no problems in areas of higher altitude. Remember, scuba diving is dangerous for a person with asthma and should be avoided.

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local pharmacy
- Asthma Victoria Tel. 1800 645 130

## Things to remember

- Make sure your day-to-day management of asthma is under control before you travel.
- Visit your doctor for a check-up and to fine tune your management and action plans.
- Take more medication than you think you'll need and always carry some with you.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Asthma Foundation of Victoria

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