

## Travelling with children

Travelling with children is challenging, but a bit of forethought can help reduce parental stress. If your child is old enough, involve them in planning for the trip so they can get excited about it. Make sure to include enough family events and child-oriented activities to amuse them while on holidays. In many cases, keeping your trip as simple as you can will reduce the number of problems. Remember that children have short attention spans and get fatigued very quickly. Complicated trips requiring lots of travelling, jam-packed itineraries or too many visits to adult-oriented attractions, such as museums, can be difficult on children and aggravating for parents.

### General suggestions

General tips to make travel with children a little easier include:

- Ask your travel agent for suggestions.
- If travelling by plane, ask for bulkhead seats or seats near an exit to give your child a safe spot to play on the floor.
- Choose appropriate accommodation, such as self-contained apartments with two or more bedrooms.
- Hire baby furniture items, such as pram, stroller, cot and high chair, rather than lug your own.
- Use disposable rather than cloth nappies.
- When visiting attractions with older children, try the 'trade-off' method - activities for adults in the morning, balanced with activities for the kids after lunch.
- Use any babysitting facilities at your hotel from time to time so you can have a break.
- Remember that the price of 'children's clubs' at some resorts is an extra expense.
- Older children will like having their own (disposable) camera and 'holiday diary' so they can record their own impressions.

### General safety suggestions

General safety tips include:

- See your doctor about vaccinations beforehand, if appropriate.
- Pack sunscreen, hats and insect repellent.
- Be particularly vigilant about the potential dangers of unfamiliar places, such as unfenced swimming pools or balconies.
- Take all sterilising equipment with you if your child is bottle-fed.
- Avoid animals such as dogs, cats and monkeys to reduce the risk of bites.
- Take a medical kit containing items such as baby paracetamol, thermometer, anti-itching lotion, oral rehydration preparation and band-aids.

### Safety suggestions during transport

Suggestions for keeping children safe while the family gets from point A to B include:

- **Car** - always use appropriate restraints, such as seatbelts or car seats. Don't stack items on the back ledge of the car or over the steering wheel, as these items will become dangerous flying projectiles if you have to brake suddenly. Use shade cloth to keep the sun from shining in your child's face. Plan for plenty of toilet stops. Frequent rest stops help to reduce the risk of motion sickness.
- **Bus or train** - use seatbelts if available. Don't allow your child to crawl or walk around while the vehicle is moving because they may fall. Keep your child seated or on your lap.
- **Plane** - airlines can arrange bassinets for infants. Try to feed your baby or child while taking off and landing, as the frequent swallowing can help prevent the build-up of pressure inside the ears. Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids to reduce the risk of dehydration.

### **Motion sickness**

The symptoms of motion sickness include blanching, headache, dizziness, complaints of feeling sick and - ultimately - vomiting. Motion sickness can occur on any mode of transport but is more likely to strike when travelling by boat. Suggestions to reduce the risk of motion sickness include:

- When travelling by car, arrange for frequent rest stops.
- Make sure your child looks out the window, rather than at a stationary object inside the vehicle (such as a book).
- Fresh air can help, so open a window if possible.
- Anti-nausea medications are available, but check with your doctor first as some drugs may not be suitable for children.
- Make sure your child eats something before travelling, but avoid heavy or greasy foods.

### **Keeping your child amused during transport**

Suggestions to keep children amused while the family gets from point A to B include:

- Pack plenty of toys.
- Offer the toys one at a time, replacing each toy with a fresh one once the child shows signs of boredom.
- To cut down on fights over sharing, make sure each child has their own stash of toys.
- Play family games such as 'I-spy'.
- Pack a picnic lunch.
- For older children, show them a map beforehand and point out landmarks as you go.

### **Unfamiliar meal routines**

Toddlers and young children are notoriously fussy eaters; travelling to unfamiliar places with new foods and different mealtime routines can further disrupt your child's eating habits. Suggestions include:

- Relax and remember that a healthy child will never voluntarily starve themselves. Trust them to eat when they're hungry.
- If flying, arrange in advance for children's meals.
- Try to keep a little bit of familiar mealtime routine, such as having breakfast in the usual way.
- Don't assume you'll always find something they'll like on a restaurant menu. Carry plenty of their favourite snacks and drinks when touring around.
- Ring ahead and see if the restaurant you're planning to visit has a children's menu.

### **Travellers' diarrhoea**

Children with travellers' diarrhoea are susceptible to dehydration. Suggestions to reduce the risk of travellers' diarrhoea include:

- Avoid risky foods such as seafood, undercooked meats, peeled and raw fruits and vegetables, and unpasteurised dairy products.
- If you are unsure of the water supply, only drink bottled water, carbonated soft drinks or bottled fruit juices.
- Use bottled water when tooth brushing.
- Wash your child's hands frequently.
- Avoid eating foods from street vendors.
- Make sure your child doesn't put their unwashed hands into their mouth.

### **Where to get help**

- Your doctor
- Chemist
- Travel agent
- Airline.

### **Things to remember**

- Check in advance with travel agents, airlines and your accommodation for child-friendly suggestions.

- Remember that children have short attention spans and get tired very quickly.
- Make sure there will be enough family events and child-oriented activities to keep them amused while away.
- Take a medical kit containing items such as baby paracetamol, thermometer, anti-itching lotion, oral rehydration preparation and band-aids.

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

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