
Asthma and travel

Summary

- Make sure your day-to-day management of asthma is under control before you travel.
 - Visit your doctor for an asthma review to fine tune your asthma management and update your asthma action plan.
 - Your doctor can also provide you with a letter describing your asthma and your current medication.
 - Check that your travel insurance policy specifically includes asthma, that you can meet any conditions or requirements, and that it offers the cover you need.
 - Take more asthma medication away with you than you think you'll need, and always carry some with you.
 - Carry your asthma medication in your hand luggage.
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Whether you are travelling for a holiday or a business trip, you can still maintain good management of your asthma with some forward planning.

Asthma and travel – visit your doctor before you go

Before taking your trip, visit your doctor to make sure your asthma is under control well before you leave. Make sure your **asthma action plan** is up to date and, if you don't already know, ask your doctor about strategies to handle your asthma if it worsens while on your trip. Ask your doctor to write up a report on your asthma that includes your medical history, the severity of your condition, your current medication 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.

Travel and asthma medication

It is a good idea to:

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

Travel and asthma-related equipment

When packing your asthma-related equipment, consider the following:

- A spacer device is cheap and portable, which makes it a better choice for travelling than a nebuliser.
- If you need a nebuliser, allow for different voltages and power points when travelling overseas. You may need to obtain a power-point adaptor.
- Make sure that the nebuliser pump can be used on the plane. You will need to make prior arrangements with the airline if you need to use your nebuliser on board the aircraft.
- Plan carefully when travelling to remote locations.
- Make sure you thoroughly understand how to use any unfamiliar equipment before you leave.

Asthma travel considerations

When you plan your trip, remember:

- Weather changes can bring on asthma symptoms, especially when the air is cold and dry.
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- All beds and pillows can harbour dust mites, which can trigger asthma symptoms. Be wary of hotels that look unclean.
- Scuba diving is dangerous for a person with asthma and should be avoided completely – try snorkelling instead.
- Be aware that different countries and cities have different allergens in the air, which may trigger asthma symptoms or an allergic reaction.
- Travel to high altitudes is normally okay, as long as your asthma is well managed at sea level. Speak to your doctor before you travel.
- Trekking, sightseeing, swimming or skiing should be problem-free if you have well-controlled asthma, a written asthma action plan and an adequate supply of asthma medication. Speak to your doctor before you travel.
- Make sure your travel companions know about your asthma and how to help when you are unwell or need **asthma first aid**.

Asthma and travel insurance

If you are travelling interstate or overseas and you have asthma, consider taking out travel insurance.

There are many different travel insurance policies available, and the level of cover provided and the conditions associated with each policy vary widely. It is best to do some research and compare policies to make sure you find one that provides adequate cover for your travels.

Asthma is often be described as a 'pre-existing medical condition' under travel insurance policies. In order to obtain cover for a pre-existing medical condition, you may have to meet certain conditions and requirements.

For asthma, these generally include:

- certain age restrictions
- a specified period of time in which you have had:
 - no exacerbations of your asthma
 - no change in your medication
 - no hospital admissions
 - no change in your usual treatment.

If you cannot meet these conditions, you might also have to:

- have a medical assessment before the policy is issued
- pay an extra premium.

This varies across insurers, so check the various policies available to make sure that you can meet the conditions and requirements of the particular policy you choose.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- **Pharmacist**
- **Asthma Australia** Tel. **1800 ASTHMA (278 462)**
- **Smartraveller** - The Australian Government's travel advisory and consular assistance service Tel. **1300 555 135** (from within Australia) or +61 2 6261 3305 from overseas
- **Insurance Council of Australia** Tel. **1300 728 228**

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

Asthma Australia

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