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## Travelling with an allergy

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### Summary

- If you have an allergy, make sure you visit your doctor before you travel, especially if you are at risk of a severe allergic reaction or an asthma attack.
  - Your doctor can advise you about medication and update your action plan.
  - Always take your medication as carry-on luggage in case you need it during the flight or your luggage is lost. Do not stow it in the overhead lockers. Keep it accessible.
  - If you are at risk of a severe allergic reaction, carry an adrenaline (epinephrine) autoinjector such as an EpiPen® and a device to call for help (mobile phone) while you are away.
  - Make sure your travel insurance will cover you for your existing allergies.
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If you have an allergy, make sure you visit your doctor before you travel, especially if you are at risk of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) or an asthma attack. Your doctor can prescribe a supply of medication for your travel and update your allergy action plan to include a travel action plan.

Make a list and plan for your allergy triggers (allergens), because travel can increase your risk of exposure to allergens such as:

- food ingredients – shellfish, fish, egg, peanuts, tree nuts and seeds
- insects
- dust and mould
- seasonal pollen – depending on the time of year that you travel.

Travelling with the possibility of life-threatening severe allergic reactions or asthma attacks means you need to take additional precautions. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) has a thorough **pre-travel checklist for people travelling with allergies, asthma and anaphylaxis**.

### Travelling with mild allergies

If you are travelling with mild allergies such as hay fever, speak with your doctor about what medication or precautions you will need to take.

If you have an allergy but do not need to carry a device to inject adrenaline (adrenaline autoinjector), it is still recommended that you carry an **ASCIA action plan for allergic reactions**.

### Travelling with a risk of severe allergic reaction

If you are at risk of severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), be sure to plan well for your trip. Speak with your doctor and make sure you understand your allergy and medication.

When you travel, be sure to carry:

- an adrenaline autoinjector on all flights – carry this in the cabin in case you need it or your luggage is lost in transit. Do not stow it in the overhead lockers. Keep it accessible
  - an adrenaline autoinjector and a device to call for help (mobile phone) at all times while you are away
  - an ASCIA travel plan for people at risk of **anaphylaxis** (severe allergic reaction) – filled in and signed by your doctor
  - an ASCIA action plan for anaphylaxis for use with your adrenaline autoinjector (EpiPen®)
  - a supply of medication to cover the time you will be away – and a bit extra in case you need to stay longer. Check expiry dates and take medication in original packaging
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- a letter from your doctor listing your allergies and medication
- travel insurance that covers pre-existing conditions.

### Travelling with food allergies

Travelling with food allergies can be difficult, especially if you are at risk of a severe allergic reaction. Do some research about food labelling in the countries you will be visiting. It is also important to consider which airline will be best able to accommodate your dietary needs.

Investigate the contact details of emergency services in your country of destination. Note the number for the switchboard in your hotel as this may vary. Consider a foreign language travel card about your allergy to show restaurants in your destination.

### Food allergies and flying

Check all airlines' policies for food allergies before you book. Not all airlines may be able to accommodate your needs. Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia has a fact sheet with the major airlines' food allergy policies as of November 2013. Some airlines may ask you to sign an indemnity form if you have a peanut allergy.

Take other precautions as described above if you are at risk of severe allergic reaction. Make sure you carry your adrenaline autoinjector on your flight in your hand luggage or clothing. You may need the adrenaline during the flight, or your luggage and your medication may be delayed or lost in transit.

### Travelling with asthma

If you have your asthma under control, flying in a pressurised cabin should not be a problem. If you are in doubt, check with your doctor. Your doctor can also make sure your asthma action plan is updated.

When you travel you will potentially be exposed to high levels of allergy triggers (allergens) that can make your asthma worse. Plan ahead and make sure you always have:

- enough medication to cover your trip plus a bit extra in case you need it
- your supply of medication both as carry-on (don't stow it in the overhead lockers – keep it accessible) and checked luggage – in case any of your luggage is delayed or lost
- a letter from your doctor listing your allergies, asthma and medication
- an up-to-date asthma action plan
- travel insurance that covers pre-existing conditions.

### Where to get help

- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000) – or the emergency number in the country in which you are travelling
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- Your doctor
- **NURSE-ON-CALL**. Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- **St John Ambulance Australia**. (Victoria) Tel. 1300 360 455
- **Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia**. Tel. 1300 728 000
- **Asthma Australia**. Tel. 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462)

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

Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)

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