

Travelling with allergy, asthma and anaphylaxis: checklist

FROM YOUR DOCTOR

Plan ahead. You may need:

- Prescriptions to cover your trip;
- Doctor's letter about the medications you need to take;
- Special vaccinations;
- Updated ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis and ASCIA Travel Plan if you are carrying an adrenaline autoinjector (you may wish to photograph these onto your mobile phone together with your prescriptions);
- Medical report for your travel insurance policy, if required.

MEDICATION

- Take enough for your trip, plus some spare in case you get delayed, lose it or need a higher dose because of illness (e.g. asthma medicines).
- Make sure medicines are in date.
- If you have been diagnosed at risk of anaphylaxis and are travelling you should carry your adrenaline autoinjector(s) with you. Factors to be considered when deciding to have more than your usual supply of adrenaline autoinjector devices might include flight duration, destination (e.g. interstate or overseas), and other destination related factors (e.g. English speaking country or not; ability to access medical care; ability to replace the adrenaline autoinjector if used as they are not available in every country; ability to prepare own food or not). Severity related factors should also be considered and all of these issues should be discussed with your doctor, noting that only 2 devices are subsidised by the Australian PBS scheme and that additional devices would have to be purchased at full cost. In New Zealand, adrenaline autoinjectors are not currently subsidised by Pharmac.
- Take medication in original packaging. This minimises the risk of having problems with Customs when leaving Australia and New Zealand (there are regulations about exporting government subsidised medicines) or Customs when entering other countries.
- Carry essential medicines in your hand luggage. Adrenaline autoinjectors should not be packed into checked in luggage. They must be easily accessible at all times.

VACCINATION

- Respiratory infections can worsen asthma. Consider influenza vaccination.
- If egg allergic, the influenza vaccine can usually be given safely. For more information go to: www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals/papers/influenza-vaccination-of-the-egg-allergic-individual
- If you need other vaccines containing egg, you will need specialist advice.

TRAVEL PLAN FOR ANAPHYLAXIS

Download an ASCIA Travel Plan for Anaphylaxis and have it completed by your doctor:

www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals/anaphylaxis-resources/ascia-travel-plan-anaphylaxis

This helps when carrying adrenaline autoinjectors (e.g. EpiPen or Anapen) in hand luggage and through Customs.

NOTIFY TRAVEL AGENT AND AIRLINE/S

- Contact your airline/s to determine their policies regarding food allergy well in advance of travel and before you book tickets.
- Tell your travel agent and airline/s about your food allergy in advance.

INSURANCE

- Have adequate travel insurance.
- Ensure the policy covers your medical condition. Special approval may be required.
- Check if there are any special conditions (e.g. doctor's report required, an additional fee to cover anaphylaxis).

HOSPITAL AND OTHER MEDICAL FACILITIES

At your travel destination/s determine the location and contact details of emergency facilities and have these details available in case they are needed. Ensure that you have a way of contacting emergency services (e.g. switching your mobile phone to international roaming or purchasing local or international SIM cards and check that they work).

ACCOMMODATION

- For food allergy, consider self catering accommodation, which gives you the option of safely preparing food for yourself.
- When booking, enquire about relevant inhalant allergen risk (e.g. pets) if you have significant asthma and/or allergic rhinitis (hay fever) symptoms.
- Speak with your doctor if you are someone who often becomes unwell when away from home. Some people have medications increased or commenced for the time of the travel.

WHEN BOARDING (AIRLINE, SHIP)

- Notify ship or airline attendants when you board about your allergies and indicate the location of your ASCIA Action Plan and adrenaline autoinjector (if prescribed).
- If a reaction occurs while travelling, follow your ASCIA Action Plan and notify travel attendants so they can assist if needed.
- You may also wish to notify passengers around you, particularly to reduce the likelihood that food may be offered to young children with food allergy.
- Consider taking your own supply of food, bearing in mind restrictions on liquids for international flights. This is particularly important when considering the bottle size of antihistamine liquid or baby formula.
- Consider wiping down tables and armrests to remove possible residual food allergens (contact can sometimes trigger mild allergic symptoms).
- While fumes or dust from inhaled food allergen might cause allergic rhinitis (hay fever) or mild asthma symptoms, the risks of serious reactions is very low unless the food is actually eaten.
- Some airlines offer "exclusion zones" (not serving allergenic food within a few rows of the allergic person). While this can be requested, availability cannot be guaranteed. Since the effectiveness of 'exclusion zones' has not yet been researched, it is unknown whether this is an effective strategy to reduce the risk of allergen exposure.
- Keep emergency medication with you in hand luggage. If travelling with an adrenaline autoinjector, keep it with you or under the seat in front of you and NOT in the overhead locker. You need to be able to access an adrenaline autoinjector with your seatbelt fastened.

LANGUAGE CARDS

If travelling to non-English speaking countries and eating out, consider purchasing foreign language travel cards that warn about your allergy, to show to food service staff. Examples include:

www.selectwisely.com and www.dietarycard.com

PATIENT SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

You may wish to contact your local patient support organisation for further information and/or resources about travelling with allergies, particularly food allergies. These organisations include:

- Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia www.allergyfacts.org.au
- Allergy New Zealand www.allergy.org.nz