

# Travel.

Going on a trip or holiday requires planning in advance but is not impossible.

## Travelling in the UK

- Take a list of your medications with you.
- Take enough medication to last the duration of the trip.
- Take your standby steroids and antibiotics in case of an exacerbation (flare-up) if you have been prescribed them.
- If you have oxygen at home, oxygen can be delivered to your holiday accommodation. Let your oxygen provider know 4–6 weeks prior to going.

## Travelling abroad

- Speak to your Health Care Professional as far in advance as possible, especially if you have had a recent exacerbation or have been in hospital recently. Your airline or insurance company may require a letter or 'fitness to fly' certificate. It is better to discuss your travel plans prior to booking.
- Get a letter from your GP listing your current medical conditions and medications. You may need this to get through customs with your medication. Doctors in other countries will know medication by different brand names than those used in the UK. A letter listing the actual drug names is helpful.

- Take enough medication to last the duration of the trip, plus extra medication in case of delays.
- Take your standby steroids and antibiotics in case of an exacerbation (flare-up) if you are prescribed them.
- Get adequate travel insurance - your insurance company will need to know you have a health condition. Make sure you are fully covered for any medical costs that arise in connection with your lung condition. Unfortunately this may make your premium higher – shop around for the best deal. The British Lung Foundation ([www.lunguk.org](http://www.lunguk.org)) has a list of companies who provide insurance for people with pre-existing medical conditions.
- If you use oxygen, arrange your travel insurance well in advance as some companies may require a letter from your GP stating you are fit to travel.
- When travelling in Europe you will require a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). You can get an application form at the Post Office, online at [www.dh.gov.uk/travellers](http://www.dh.gov.uk/travellers) or by calling 0845 606 2030.

Your oxygen supplier should help you to pre-arrange oxygen for your destination. Speak to them well in advance for details, including how to get help should you need it while on holiday.

## Choosing a destination

- Many people with lung conditions prefer warm climates that are not too hot or humid. Lower oxygen levels at higher altitudes can make breathing difficulties worse.
- Consider whether your destination is flat or hilly as this could affect your ability to get around comfortably.
- Consider wheelchair access if required. If you will be using a wheelchair on holiday in the UK, Tourism For All (0845 1249971, [www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)) and local tourist boards inspect the accessibility of all accommodation, so contact them for suitable places to stay. If you use a mobility scooter, it may be possible to hire one whilst you are on holiday.
- If possible, find out the location of nearby doctors or health centres - if you are going abroad it may be useful to find out the location of English-speaking health centres.

## Choosing transport

### Travelling in the car:

- Make sure your oxygen cylinder is secured in the back seat.

### Travelling by train, ferry or bus/coach:

- Give notice of any requirements you may have before booking. Check what provision the company will make to help you with getting on and off, help with wheelchairs, access to toilets etc.
- Check with the train, boat or bus company that they are happy for you to travel with oxygen. Different companies have different policies so get confirmation in advance.
- If you get travel sick, take anti-motion sickness medication with you. Try to sit at the front of the car or bus. Other travel sickness remedies may be useful.

You may be eligible for a disabled persons railcard if you receive attendance allowance, disability living allowance or are buying or leasing a vehicle through the motability scheme. [www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk); 08457 48 49 50.

### Travelling by plane:

- Consult your GP first if you have had health problems when flying in the past or you have ever suffered from a clot in your leg, veins or lungs.
- Air pressure in an aircraft cabin is lower than air pressure at ground level like being at altitude. At high altitudes everyone's blood oxygen levels fall. In most people this has no effect. If you already have low blood oxygen levels then the extra dip that happens while you are in the plane can cause more breathlessness and discomfort.
- People who can walk 100 metres on the level without needing oxygen, at a steady pace without feeling breathless or needing to stop, are not likely to be troubled by the reduced pressure in aircraft cabins. If you cannot do this, you will need to talk to your doctor regarding whether you can fly. You can arrange a flight assessment through your GP or consultant. The assessment will involve monitoring your blood oxygen levels whilst breathing air with a lower percentage of oxygen than normal (15%).
- If you use oxygen, check the airline policy when you book. Some companies do not allow you to take your own oxygen on board so the airline will have to provide oxygen for you. Bring your own nasal cannulae. There is likely to be a charge for this. Different airlines have different charges; check with each one before you arrange your flight. Check whether oxygen is available at both airports. If the flight involves stopping at a third airport for refuelling, check and how oxygen will be supplied there if required.
- If you need a portable nebuliser, check if you can carry it into the cabin of the plane and whether it will cost extra. It will have to be battery operated.
- Keep your medication in your hand luggage in case your luggage is delayed or lost.
- If you get breathless when walking, make sure you have help at airports. Distances to departure gates can be long - arrange assistance with getting to/from the gate and getting on/off the plane at both airports in advance.
- Drink plenty of water and non-alcoholic drinks during the flight.
- Any chest infection should be completely treated before you fly home. You should have medical approval before flying home.

## Tips for any form of transport

- Set off in plenty of time so you don't have to rush.
- If you are sitting for a long time, do regular foot and leg exercises to help your circulation and prevent blood clots from forming in your legs. In a plane, try to stretch or move around as much as possible. In the car, have regular breaks to stretch and walk around

## Holiday tips

- **Plan in advance** - If you leave things to last minute, you could forget something crucial. Think about how you can walk, how many stairs you can manage, access to toilets and what transport you can use. You must arrange full travel insurance for you and any companion before you go.
- **Be realistic** - Places you liked in the past may not be suitable now. Pick something you can cope with physically.
- **Shop around** - Everybody has different policies for people with lung disease, so find the best deal for you. Many travel agents offer holidays for people with special requirements.
- **Ask questions** - Travel companies are used to dealing with special requirements.

### BOC Healthcare

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