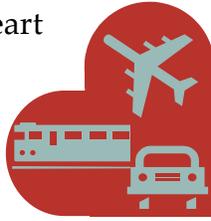




Tips for Travelling When You Have Heart Failure

With some planning, people with heart failure can safely travel.



Planning for travel

- Talk with your healthcare provider before you commit to any trip, especially if you have a pacemaker or implanted cardioverter defibrillator (ICD).
 - Make sure your immunizations are up to date.
 - Buy travel health insurance, especially when travelling outside of Canada and even if only for a day. Make sure it covers pre-existing illnesses.
 - Buy cancellation insurance on flights and bookings, in case you have a sudden change in your health.
 - When flying, especially outside of Canada, you might need a travel letter from your doctor explaining why you need to travel with all your medications. Check with your travel agent or airline.
 - Know where to go to get medical help when you get there by finding out before you leave. Check to see if there is a hospital or medical clinic nearby.
 - Pack a cell phone. Check with your cell phone provider to make sure you have coverage in the area you are travelling.
 - If possible, weigh yourself while you are traveling.
 - If travelling to a different time zone, ask your healthcare provider if you should adjust your medication schedule.
- Consider wearing a Medical Alert bracelet or necklace.
 - Carry copies of your medical information such as:
 - results of recent blood tests
 - a list of health and medical problems
 - names and contact phone numbers of your healthcare providers
 - a list of all your current medications
 - Take enough of each medication to last the whole trip plus extra, in case of an emergency or a travel delay.
 - Keep all your medications in the packaging supplied by the pharmacy.
 - Consider asking your pharmacist to put your medications into 'blister packs' so you don't have to travel with all your original containers.
 - Make sure each medication name is clearly marked. (This is very important when crossing borders.)

When not to travel

It is best to stay home if:

- ✗ Your healthcare provider has advised you not to travel.
- ✗ You have recently come home from being in the hospital.
- ✗ Your doctor has changed one or more of your medications, such as a change in dose or how often you take it.
- ✗ You cannot get travel health insurance.
- ✗ You notice increased signs of heart failure (shortness of breath, weight gain, fatigue, cough, swelling in your feet or belly area, or dizziness).

Travelling with a heart device

- If you have a heart device (a pacemaker or an implanted cardioverter defibrillator), check with your healthcare provider, especially if your device is being monitored remotely.
- If you have just had a heart device inserted, wait until your first follow-up appointment to find out when it is safe for you to travel.
- Ask your doctor for a copy of your heart device instructions in the language of the country you are travelling to.
- Ask for a recent print out of settings for your heart device.
- If you have an implanted cardioverter defibrillator (ICD), ask what you should do if you get a shock while away.
- Keep your cell phone at least 6 inches away from your heart device.
- Always carry your heart device identification card with you.
- When going through security:
 - Show your heart device identification card before going through the metal detectors.
 - Ask for a 'hand check' instead of a wand metal detector check. A wand metal detector could momentarily change the settings on your heart device.
 - Tell security using wand metal detectors they can only pass over your heart device once every 5 or more seconds.
 - Know your heart device is going to set off an alarm when walking through an archway metal detector; you may need a 'hand check' as well.

Did you know? It is safe to go through archway metal detectors, body scanners, and retail store anti-theft equipment with a heart device.

During your travels

- When sitting for long periods, get up or get out for a walk every 2 hours.
- Whenever you have to check your luggage, carry all your medications with you in a carry-on bag.
- Take your medications on schedule.
- It is best not to buy any medications in other countries. Ingredients can vary from what is in the medication from Canada.
- Be careful you don't drink too much fluid. When in hot climates or when socializing, people tend to drink more.
- Watch your portion size for both meals and snacks. Eating more than normal can cause bloating, an upset stomach, and indigestion.
- Eat your largest meal either at lunch or earlier in the afternoon. Have a light dinner or early evening snack.
- Eating out usually means foods high in sodium. Whenever you can:
 - Ask for "no added salt".
 - Choose low calorie and low salt meals and snacks.
 - Say "no thanks" to sauces, gravies, and prepared foods.
 - Make your own low salt meals.



Plan ahead. Travel safely. Enjoy!