

Travelling With Diabetes

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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To be reviewed June 2029 or sooner, if needed.

- If you are taking insulin with you for a long period of time, remember to keep it at a safe temperature to prevent overheating or freezing:



- > **If it is warm**, put it in a FRIO® bag or an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack (**make sure the insulin and the ice are not directly touching**)
- > **If it is cold**, keep your insulin close to your body under your clothes.
- Try to avoid illnesses caused by contaminated (dirty) food and water.
- Alcohol can affect your glucose levels. Ask your Diabetes Care team how to adjust your medication and/or insulin when you drink alcohol. To learn more, visit:
 - > www.diabetes.ca/diabetescanadawebsite/media/managing-my-diabetes/tools%20and%20resources/alcohol-and-diabetes.pdf?ext=.pdf
- Remember to have fun. Do not let diabetes prevent you from enjoying life and time with loved ones.



- **If you will be flying on an airplane through 3 or more time zones in 1 day**, talk with your Diabetes Centre team before your trip. You may need to adjust your insulin for safety.

At your destination

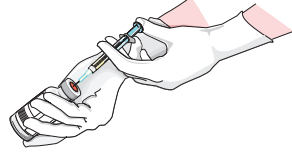
- Your Diabetes Centre team is not able to provide care or support to you while you are outside of Nova Scotia.
- Wear shoes that will protect your feet from injuries and infection, like:
 - › Water shoes for walking on the beach, on hot surfaces, and at water parks or pools
 - › Well-fitting sneakers for walking
 - › Well-fitting ski boots for skiing



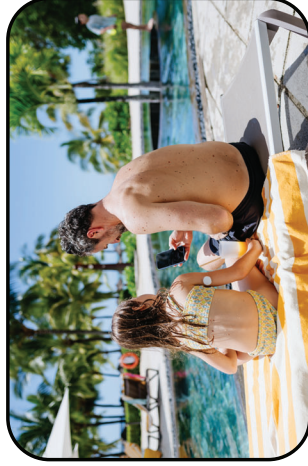
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Before your trip:

- Get any vaccinations you need at least 4 weeks (1 month) before your trip. This will give you time to deal with any possible side effects.
- Get a list of your medications from your pharmacy. It should include the generic names of your medications and their dosages (amounts).
- Ask your diabetes health care provider for a letter that lists the supplies and medications you need.
- If you will be very active while you are travelling (like walking, hiking, golfing, swimming, skiing), you may need to lower your diabetes medication. Talk about this with your Diabetes Centre team before your trip.
- Check if your travel insurance covers medical care at your destination for diabetes emergencies.



- **If you use an insulin pump:**
 - › Call your pump company to ask for a loaner pump in case your pump is damaged or lost. There is no cost for this.
- **If you use an insulin pump or glucose sensors:**
 - › Review the device manual or call the manufacturer to check what security screening (like body scanners, hand wands, X-ray bag screening) is safe for your devices.
 - › You may need to ask for a private space for a physical pat-down and manual (by hand) bag screening.
- It is best if your glucose levels are well managed before your trip.



- **If you are driving:**
 - › Take breaks to stretch and walk around.
- **If you are flying on an airplane:**
 - › Try to stretch and walk in the airport.

- Try to follow your usual routine. Take your medications and eat meals and snacks at your usual times, if possible.
- Keep your treatment for hypoglycemia nearby at all times.
- Use a glucose sensor or check your glucose every 4 to 6 hours. Your glucose patterns may be different because of changes in your sleep, eating, exercise, and stress levels.

- **Always follow the *Diabetes Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines for driving*.** To learn more, visit:

- › <https://diabetes.ca/DiabetesCanadaWebsite/media/Managing-My-Diabetes/Tools%20and%20Resources/drive-safe-with-diabetes.pdf?ext=.pdf>

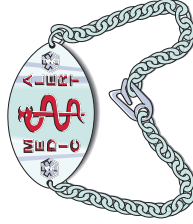


- **Keep your diabetes supplies in your carry-on bag.** The luggage storage areas on trains and airplanes are not temperature-controlled and this can affect your supplies.

- **Do not** pack all of your diabetes supplies in 1 bag, in case that bag gets lost, stolen, or damaged.

While you are travelling:

- Wear a medical ID bracelet or necklace (like MedicAlert®) stating that you have diabetes. This will help medical responders in case of an emergency.



- If you are flying on an airplane, you may want to wear a “Hidden Disabilities Sunflower”. This tells airport staff that you have a Personalized Diabetes Type 1 Card. For more information, visit:

- › <https://hdsunflower.com/ca/personalised-diabetes-type-1-card.html>

- Wiggle your toes and ankles while sitting for long periods of time. This will help to increase the circulation (blood flow) to your feet.

What to pack

- Pack double the amount of supplies you think you will need, including:

- Glucose sensors
- Blood sugar meter
- Blood sugar test strips, lancets, and a back-up blood sugar meter (even if you



normally use glucose sensors). If you lose or break your phone, you may need to check your glucose sensor results with a finger poke.

- Extra batteries for your blood sugar meter
- Ketone test strips
- Insulin
- Glucagon
- Alcohol wipes, in case you are not near a sink and need to clean your finger for a finger poke

- Medication for diarrhea (loose, watery poop), vomiting (throwing up), and motion sickness

- **If you use an insulin pump, you will also need:**

- Infusion set or pods
- Written pump settings (in case you need to switch to your loaner pump)

- Extra batteries for your insulin pump
- Syringes and an insulin vial (or an insulin pen with insulin cartridges)
 - > You may need these in case of site failure.



- You may need adhesive (sticky) aids to help keep your glucose sensors and/or insulin pump sites in place if you will be:
 - > Going somewhere hot
 - > Doing lots of physical activity
 - > Swimming a lot
- You may take sharps (like syringes, needles, and lancets) in your carry-on bag if:
 - > They are in the original package with a prescription label that has your name on it **and**

- > You are also carrying the injectable medication (insulin) and they are in original packaging with a prescription label listing your name.



- **If you use a diabetes app** on your smartphone (like for your insulin pump and/or glucose sensors), you will also need:
 - Battery bank, to charge your smartphone so you do not have to plug it in to charge it
 - Your diabetes app may not work in some countries. Check before you go and buy e-sim cards for your smartphone, if needed.
 - Snacks (like sandwiches, fruit, granola bars, crackers), in case a meal is delayed or cancelled while you are travelling



- Treatments for hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), like:

Fast-acting sugar:

- > Dex4® Fast Acting Glucose tablets
- > Skittles®
- > Life Savers®

- > Sugar packets
- > Juice

Carbohydrate and protein snacks:

- > Kellogg's® Special K® Protein Meal Bars
- > Apple slices with peanut butter
- > Trail mix made of dry cereal and nuts
- > Beef jerky and pretzels
- > Glucerna® meal replacement products