

How to create your family's medical travel checklist

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Before you pack up your family for a cross country trip or an international plane ride, it is important to be sure each member has the resources they need to address any of their medical needs. An expert

with Baylor College of Medicine shows how to create a family travel medical checklist to make sure your family stays healthy and safe on vacation.

"Traveling can expose families to different environments, climates, and potential health risks. A medical [travel checklist](#) makes families take a step back to ensure the necessary [precautions](#) to protect their health and safety," said Dr. Mike Ren, assistant professor of family and community medicine at Baylor. "A list should include essential items such as medications, first aid supplies and personal protective equipment."

The checklist

Before leaving on vacation, speak with your primary care provider. They will have advice and recommendations for vaccines and medications depending on where in the world your family will be traveling. If family members are on medications, be sure there is enough supply for the trip and check to see if special documentation is required to bring your medications across borders. Be careful if [medication](#) or other medical devices are traveling in high heat, such as in extended car rides, as items like insulin, some antibiotics, inhalers, eye drops, liquid medications or ointments can lose their potency or change chemical composition when exposed to extreme heat.

"Over-the-counter medications like pain relievers, allergy medications and certain vitamin supplements can also be compromised in high heat," Ren said. "Check the packaging for specific storage recommendations and ask your pharmacist or doctors about best practices for handling medications."

If taking an extended vacation, additional precautions may be needed. First, for family members with chronic conditions, meet with your doctor to determine if prolonged time away from home is ideal. When

dealing with medication, Ren says to be sure enough is on hand for the entirety of the stay or to ensure there is access to local pharmacies, doctors, telehealth or mailing options for medications at your destination. When traveling across time zones, additional planning for timing of medication is important. Ren encourages patients to work with their healthcare providers to adjust medication timing to minimize disruptions to treatment regimens.

Ren advises postponing travel if you are experiencing illness, especially one that is contagious. Consider postponing travel if someone in your party has undergone a recent major surgery or has an uncontrolled chronic disease or conditions that may require immediate medical intervention. Pregnant women should avoid flying in their third trimester, and Ren advises pregnant women to speak with their OB-GYN about travel plans, especially if they are in a high-risk pregnancy.

Medical equipment

For those who need medical equipment for daily use, it is important to make plans to include these devices in your luggage. Devices such as insulin pumps, glucose meters, nebulizers and blood pressure machines and mobility aids like canes or walkers are common; however, airlines and other transportation providers may have requirements on how they are transported.

"Common prohibited items on airlines include oxygen tanks, large liquid oxygen systems, compressed gas cylinders and certain radioactive materials," said Ren. "If these are required, you may need to plan your transportation methods around these restrictions or ensure they are available at your destination."

Additionally, some may use medical supplies like lancets, bandages, wound care materials or catheters in their daily lives. Ensuring they are

properly packaged with proper medical documentation can help alleviate any last-minute headaches.

Adolescents and seniors

Most pediatricians advise parents to wait six months before traveling with their babies to ensure their immune system is better developed. Ren says it is generally recommended to avoid unnecessary travel, especially by air, during the first few weeks of a baby's life. Consult with a pediatrician to assess the baby's health and determine when it is appropriate to start traveling.

Seniors should consider factors like individual health, physical capabilities, personal preferences and accessibility when deciding travel plans.

"A medical travel checklist gives families peace of mind. They can feel confident that they have taken all necessary precautions to address potential medical issues during their trip. It reduces anxiety and allows them to focus on enjoying their travel experience," Ren said.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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