

Heart trouble and traveling over the holidays? Experts offer tips

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It's not simple traveling if you have heart disease, but a chronic condition needn't keep someone from seeing friends and family during the

holidays, the American Heart Association (AHA) says.

Most people only need to toss a few clothes and essentials into a bag before they hit the road or catch their flight, but not folks who have heart problems, said [Dr. Gladys Velarde](#), a professor of medicine at the University of Florida in Jacksonville.

"It's not always that simple for people who have [chronic health conditions](#) that require multiple medications or special medical equipment," Velarde said in an AHA news release. "There are also considerations for how to maintain your health and not put yourself at increased risk."

But with a little pre-travel prep, people with [heart problems](#) can overcome the special challenges they might face while traveling, the AHA says.

"Anticipating a big trip can be stressful for many—and stress is not good for your health," Velarde said. "Every individual's condition is unique, and you'll want to tailor your travel plans to your specific needs. By taking a little time now to plan and prepare, you can enjoy your holiday."

AHA tips include:

- Talk to your doctor or heart specialist about your travel plans and ask them for tips on managing your specific health problems while on the road
- Carry a copy of your key medical records, contact info for your doctors and a list of all your prescriptions
- Make sure you have enough meds to last your entire trip, and clearly label them
- Keep [time zones](#) in mind and adjust your medication schedules accordingly

- Plan for transporting medications that need to be refrigerated
- Pack any special medical equipment you might need, like a blood pressure cuff or glucose monitor

"Depending on where you're traveling, you'll also want to do some research and planning specific to the location," Velarde added.

"The [local climate](#) and elevation may impact how you feel—[extreme heat](#) or cold can affect circulation and put extra strain on your heart," she said. "In [high altitudes](#) there is less oxygen in the air, and that means less oxygen will be carried in your blood."

Air travel is especially tough during the holidays, and you can make things easier by planning ahead before you get to the airport, Velarde said.

- When booking your ticket, request a wheelchair or courtesy cart to get to your terminal.
- Keep in mind that you might need to go through a special security screening if you have a pacemaker or defibrillator implant.
- Consider wearing compression socks and walking around the cabin when it's safe to do so, to improve your circulation. Long flights, particularly more than four hours, can increase your risk of blood clots.

"Maintaining your health while you're traveling is also important," Velarde said. "Stay well hydrated, don't overindulge in food or drink, know your physical activity limits, pace yourself and rest as often as you need."

More information: The American Heart Association has more about [travel and heart disease](#).

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