

Fact Sheet – Air Travel and Diabetes

1. Am I allowed to bring my diabetes supplies with me on the plane?

Yes. TSA specifically states that passengers are permitted to board airplanes with insulin, syringes, insulin pumps, liquids “includ[ing] “water, juice, or liquid nutrition,” and “all diabetes related medication, equipment, and supplies.”

2. What are some general tips as I prepare to travel?

- Arrive at the airport 2-3 hours prior to flight
- Review TSA’s website for travel updates at www.tsa.gov
- Whenever possible, bring prescription labels for medication and medical devices (while not required by TSA, making them available will make the security process go more quickly)
- Pack medications in a separate clear bag and place in your carry-on luggage
- Keep a quick-acting source of glucose to treat low blood glucose as well as an easy-to-carry snack such as a nutrition bar
- Carry or wear medical identification and carry contact information for your physician
- Pack extra supplies
- Be patient with lines, delays, and new screening procedures

3. What are some examples of items that are permitted through security?

- Insulin and insulin loaded dispensing products (vials or box of individual vials, jet injectors, biojectors, epipens, infusers, and preloaded syringes)
- Unlimited number of unused syringes when accompanied by insulin or other injectable medication
- Lancets, blood glucose meters, blood glucose meter test strips, alcohol swabs, meter-testing solutions
- Insulin pump and insulin pump supplies (cleaning agents, batteries, plastic tubing, infusion kit, catheter, and needle)—insulin pumps and supplies must be accompanied by insulin
- Glucagon emergency kit
- Urine ketone test strips
- Unlimited number of used syringes when transported in Sharps disposal container or other similar hard-surface container
- Sharps disposal containers or similar hard-surface disposal container for storing used syringes and test strips
- Liquids (to include water, juice, or liquid nutrition) or gels
- Continuous blood glucose monitors
- All diabetes related medication, equipment, and supplies

4. What if my insulin, liquids, and gels are more than 3.4 ounces?

Despite the general rule prohibiting passengers from bringing most liquids and gels through security, people with diabetes may take their insulin, other medications such as Smylin, Byetta, and Glucagon, and other liquids and gels, including juice and cake gel, through TSA checkpoints, even if they are in containers greater than 3.4 ounces.

Although TSA does allow multiple containers of liquid or gel to treat hypoglycemia, as a practical matter you may want to consider alternative forms of carbohydrates, including glucose tablets, hard candy, or raisins.

All medical liquids in containers greater than 3.4 ounces must be removed from your carry-on luggage and declared to TSA personnel. They should not be placed in the quart-sized zip-top bag used for non-medical liquids.

Under normal conditions, insulin can safely pass through X-ray machines at airport terminals. If you have concerns about X-rays, you can request hand inspection. Also, insulin never should be placed in checked baggage. It could be affected by severe changes in pressure and temperature. Inspect your insulin before injecting each dose. If you notice anything unusual about the appearance of your insulin or you notice that your insulin needs are changing, call your doctor.

5. Do I need to have my prescription with me?

While TSA does not require you to have your prescription with you, having it may expedite the security screening process if you are subject to additional screening. TSA states that “It is recommended (not required) that passengers bring along any supporting documentation (ID cards, letter from doctor, etc.) regarding their medication needs. It is recommended, not required, that the label on prescription medications match the passengers boarding pass. If the name on [the] prescription medication label does not match the name of the passenger, the passenger should expect to explain why to the security officers.” *Changes in Allowances for Persons with Disabilities at Airport Security*, www.tsa.gov/assets/pdf/special_needs_memo.pdf.

6. Is there a discreet way I can let TSA know about my diabetes?

TSA has created an optional notification card that individuals can hand to screeners to inform them in a discreet manner that they have a disability, medical condition, or medical device that may affect security screening. While this card will not exempt anyone from security screening, TSA believes that this can facilitate the screening process. For more information, see <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/know-your-rights/discrimination/public-accommodations/air-travel-and-diabetes/where-can-i-find-more.html>.

7. Can I request a visual inspection of my diabetes supplies?

Yes. You have the option of requesting a visual inspection of your insulin and diabetes associated supplies rather than putting them through X-ray. Keep in mind that you must request a visual inspection before the screening process begins otherwise your medications and supplies will undergo X-ray inspection. You should separate your medication and associated supplies from your other property in a pouch or bag. Medications should be labeled so they are identifiable.

In order to prevent contamination or damage to medication and associated supplies and/or fragile medical materials, you should be asked at the security checkpoint to display, handle, and repack your own medication and associated supplies during the visual inspection process.

Any medication and/or associated supplies that cannot be cleared visually must be submitted for X-ray screening. If you refuse, you might not be permitted to carry your medications and related supplies into the sterile area.

8. What should I do if I experience hypoglycemia during screening?

You should immediately inform screeners if you are experiencing low blood sugar and are in need of medical assistance.

9. Are there additional screening procedures for individuals who use pumps and continuous blood glucose monitors?

At this time, TSA has not provided any consumer information that explains additional screening for insulin pump wearers. TSA states: “If you are concerned or uncomfortable about going through the walk-through metal detector with your insulin pump, notify the Security Officer that you are wearing an insulin pump and would like a full-body pat-down and a visual inspection of your pump instead. Advise the Security Officer that the insulin pump cannot be removed because it is inserted with a catheter (needle) under the skin.” *Hidden Disabilities: Travelers with Disabilities and Medical Conditions*, www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/editorial_1374.shtm#3.

However, the Association has received reports from several travelers which suggest that there is a new TSA policy subjecting all pump-wearers to additional screening. Specifically, on multiple occasions when TSA personnel have become aware that a traveler uses an insulin pump, they have done a comprehensive hand and explosive check of all of the traveler’s carry-on baggage, not just medical supplies. In light of these reports, we recommend that you allow extra time to be processed through airport security if you wear an insulin pump.

The Association is pursuing clarification on this policy and will post this information on its website when it becomes available. If you have been subject to this policy, please contact 1-800-DIABETES and ask to speak with a legal advocate.

10. Where can I find more information?

The TSA website provides extensive guidance on traveling with diabetes, including:

- *Hidden Disabilities: Travelers with Disabilities and Medical Conditions*
www.tsa.gov/assets/pdf/special_needs_memo.pdf
- *Changes in Allowances for Persons with Disabilities at Airport Security*
www.tsa.gov/assets/pdf/special_needs_memo.pdf
- *Travelers with Disabilities and Medical Conditions*
www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/index.shtm
- *Discrimination*
www.tsa.gov/travelers/customer/discrimination.shtm

The Association also has more information on travel in general, not just security issues:

- *When You Travel*
<http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/treatment-and-care/medication/when-you-travel.html>
- *Diabetes 911: How to Handle Everyday Emergencies*, available from our Bookstore at <http://www.shopdiabetes.org/> or by calling 1-800-232-6455.

11. What can I do if I have problems?

If you have an immediate need while being screened, you should ask for a screener supervisor.

After your trip concludes, you may also want to make a complaint. If you believe you have been subject to unfair treatment because of your diabetes, please call us at 1-800-DIABETES to find out how you can speak with a legal advocate.

Complaints about discriminatory treatment by TSA personnel should be directed to TSA's Office of Civil Rights. You may call TSA at 1-877-EEO-4TSA or go to its discrimination complaint site at www.tsa.gov/travelers/customer/discrimination.shtm.

TSA accepts complaints by mail to:

Transportation Security Administration
Director, Office of Civil Rights
601 South 12th Street - West Tower, TSA-6
Arlington, Virginia 20598
Attn: External Programs Division

If you think you have experienced discriminatory treatment by air carrier personnel (pilots, flight attendants, gate agents or check-in counter personnel), you should contact your air carrier and you may also make a complaint with the Department of Transportation's Aviation Consumer Protection Division (ACPD). You may call the ACPD at 1-202-366-2220 or see its informational page at <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/problems.htm>.

More information on where travelers may file complaints for travel service problems is available here: <http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/DiscrimComplaintsContacts.htm>.

Important Note: This fact sheet describing the legal rights of individuals with diabetes is for your general information and review only, and is not to be construed as a substitute for the advice of legal counsel.