

Travel Doesn't Have to be Challenging

By Peggy Slade-Sowders

A change in a medical or physical condition or the need to travel with an elderly loved one may have you rethinking your winter get-away or holiday travel plans. With careful planning and a little extra preparation, you can still travel safely and comfortably to that warm destination or to visit family over the holidays. Always consult with the physician prior to booking the arrangements. The physician will assist with identifying abilities and limitations based on the circumstances, assist with approving early medication refills and written documentation, if needles are required as well as provide information on any surgical implants or medical devices that need special screening at the airport.



If traveling by air, notify the airline of any special needs when making reservations. For disabled travelers, wheelchair transport in the airport, designated seating on the aircraft, and assistance for getting on and off the plane are all available. If on-board oxygen is needed, check with the airline regarding its policy. When traveling, it is recommended that all medications be left in their original containers, clearly identified and packed in a separate bag. A brief medical history and emergency contact information, including physician's name and number should also be packed. Generally, there is no limit or charge for carry-on items for medical supplies, equipment or mobility devices.

It is also a good idea to contact TSA at least 48 hours in advance of departure. When notified of special needs in advance, special screening is available for those with mobility aides, devices and medical equipment, making the process of going through security smoother. When booking hotels, if there is a mobility issue, be sure to ask for handicapped accessible rooms. Rooms on the first floor, close to the entrance or close to the elevator provide easier access.

Allow time for rest and settling in after reaching your destination. Be realistic about how much can be accomplished in a day. Build in time for breaks and relaxation throughout the day. As it is easy to become dehydrated while traveling, drink plenty of water. Maintaining a daily routine similar to home with regular meals, medication times and bedtime is healthy and can reduce stress.

If you need help planning your travel, travel agents can facilitate special accommodations such as those mentioned above. They are knowledgeable and experienced in planning accessible and senior travel and can help reduce the stress when traveling with someone needing this

type of care. In summary, a little advanced planning can go along way to assure that any medical and accessibility needs are addressed and do not interfere with making another trip enjoyable and memorable.

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