For people living with chronic pain, any type of travel can cause setbacks in pain levels and their usual level of functioning.

Being prepared before you go is always a good rule of thumb, and can help you be safe and foresee and avoid problems. Advanced planning can also help you ease the stress and physical strain of traveling — both of which can make the pain worse.

This checklist can help you before and during your trip.

### Before You Go

- **Check in with your health care provider.** He or she may want to see you depending on how you’re feeling, where you are headed and how long you’ll be gone.

- **Ask how you can best keep up with medication(s) and non-drug pain therapies while you’re away.**
  
  For example:
  
  - Do you need to make any changes to your pain management plan?
  - Does your medication schedule need to be adjusted (especially if you are traveling across multiple time zones)?
  - Should you bring extra medication just in case you run into any unexpected delays?
  - Are there gentle exercises or stretches that you can do during your travels to help ease the pain?

- **Know who you should contact at your destination if you have a medical problem.**

- **Lighten your load.** Carefully think through what you really need on your trip and pack lightly. Consider shipping anything that is too heavy for you to manage on your own.

- **Call ahead to flag your reservation.** When you book your travel, explain your condition and any special arrangements or services you may need. Place another call before you leave to confirm this request is on file.

- **Pack a “less pain” travel kit.** Having a pain-relieving bag of tricks with you can help you feel more in control of your pain. Read the American Pain Foundation (APF) handout, *Your Personal “Less Pain” Travel Kit*, for ideas.

- **Bring copies of medical documents.** At a minimum, make sure you have:
  
  - A signed letter from your health care provider explaining the nature of your condition, any medications you need, as well as steps that can be taken should you have a pain flare
  - A complete list of all of the prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements that you take
  - Insurance and pharmacy benefit cards
  - Device ID card, if you use an implantable pain therapy
  - Information about your specific condition printed from reputable health websites such as the American Pain Foundation (www.painfoundation.org), Medline Plus (www.medlineplus.org) or Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.com) in the event that you need to explain more about how your pain limits you

  *Make sure to keep medications in their original packaging with prescription labels intact.*

- **Talk with travel companions to manage expectations.** Anyone accompanying you on a trip should understand your pain management needs and that you’ll need to pace yourself.
During Your Travels

- **Factor in extra time** at every point along your journey so you don’t feel rushed or anxious — both of which can trigger pain.
- Be prepared to **talk about your pain condition** and any special assistance that you may need.
- **Research sights, meeting spaces and restaurants** you may frequent so you know what to expect and can request special services if needed.
- **Stick with self-management routines** to keep your pain levels low.
- **Listen to your body.** As tempting as it might be, don’t overdo it. Schedule regular breaks, and be sure to get enough sleep.
- **Eat healthful foods and stay hydrated.**
- **Stretch.** Traveling often means being confined to cramped spaces for a period of time. Try not to stay in any one position for too long.
- **Wear comfortable clothing and shoes.**
- **Take extra care with your medications.** Pack them in your carry-on bag. Be discreet when taking your medications and don’t keep them in plain sight. Sadly, there are people who might want to steal them.
- **Be patient.** No amount of planning can ensure a hassle-free trip. Expect the unexpected and if someone gives you a hard time, try to keep your cool and use it as an opportunity to educate the person about pain.
- **Know there will be good days and bad days.**

For more tips, see APF’s booklet, *Your Pain and Travel Guide.*

**OTHER RESOURCES THAT MIGHT HELP**

Check out APF’s pain and travel resources, including:

- An informational booklet, *Your Pain and Travel Guide, How to Plan Before You Go*
- *Your Personal “Less Pain” Travel Kit*
- *What Would You Do?* Common travel-related scenarios and advice from others living with pain

These resources are available at [www.painsafe.org](http://www.painsafe.org).

Here you will also find a wealth of information and tools about the safe use of pain therapies, links to *PainAid,* APF’s 24-hour online support community, and much more.

**OUR MISSION**


American Pain Foundation
A United Voice of Hope and Power over Pain

1-888-615-PAIN (7246)
[www.painfoundation.org](http://www.painfoundation.org)

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