



Most people with epilepsy can travel and should be encouraged to do so. Aside from the preparation for possible seizures and medication, it is good practice to follow some general travel guidelines.

Documentation

It may help to:

- ❖ Carry copies of important documents as well as leaving copies with someone in Australia.
- ❖ Include in these documents your emergency contact numbers such as next of kin and numbers to call if credit cards are lost.
- ❖ Make or update wills, give friends or family a copy of the itinerary and make regular contact when going away for a long period.
- ❖ Know where the Australian Consulate or High Commission is located in the countries being visited.

Preparing for the trip

- ❖ Ask the airline what they will do if a seizure occurs on a flight so you know what to expect.
- ❖ Well before the departure date, visit the doctor and discuss vaccinations or other health precautions that are needed, and what effect these may have on seizure control.
- ❖ Find out the healthcare standards that can be expected at each destination and the procedures to follow for accessing healthcare.
- ❖ Investigate travel insurance. Most insurance companies regard epilepsy as a pre-existing condition and will charge a higher premium. Shop around or ask the travel agent for assistance. It may be difficult finding insurance, especially if there have been recent seizures. A pre-existing disclosure form will usually need to be completed. It is important to be accurate and honest. Should a claim be lodged, the insurance company will check if medical treatment has been previously received. If seizures have not been disclosed, it may invalidate the claim.
- ❖ Obtain a letter from the doctor stating seizures type, medications prescribed and the doctor's contact details. The letter can be shown to Customs or a treating doctor, if required.
- ❖ If seizures are likely to occur during the trip, take a travelling companion who is familiar with seizures or join an organised tour with a trip leader who can assist if seizures occur or medical treatment is needed. When a person has regular seizures, some airlines allow their companion to travel at a discounted fare.
- ❖ As tiredness is a common trigger for seizures, minimise fatigue by allowing adequate rest time during and immediately after the trip. If travelling across time zones, discuss ways to manage jet lag with the doctor. If the flight is lengthy, a stopover should be considered.
- ❖ Check that medication is available in, or can be taken to, the countries to be visited. Medication sold overseas may have a different name or may be slightly different, and the pharmaceutical company should be able to provide these details.
- ❖ Consider getting a medical ID bracelet. Some identification is always advisable particularly when carrying medications.
- ❖ Take an ample supply of medications in the containers in which they were dispensed, detailing the traveller's name, the medication name and dose prescribed.
- ❖ Keep a supply of medications both in carry-on luggage and check-in luggage, so that if one lot is lost there is a supply elsewhere.
- ❖ Those with an Australian driver's licence who wish to drive in another country should check local guidelines on

driving and epilepsy, as these vary. It may be illegal for you to drive in some countries.

During the flight

- ⚡ If changing time zones, space medication doses over a 24 hour period. If medications are normally taken morning and night or by any other regimen, discuss timing with the doctor.
- ⚡ Avoid alcohol and other drugs that may lower the seizure threshold.
- ⚡ Avoid dehydration by drinking an adequate quantity of water during the flight.

When in another country

- ⚡ Depending on the destination, check that water is safe to drink. Contaminated water can cause gastric upset even when it has only been used to brush teeth, wash lettuce or in icecubes. This can lead to vomiting and diarrhea which reduces the absorption of antiepileptic medication and may cause seizures.

For further information, phone the Health Insurance Commission's Drugs Diversion Enquiry line 1800 500 147 or visit the website www.hic.gov.au

This information is given to provide accurate, general information about epilepsy. Medical information and knowledge changes rapidly and you should consult your doctor for more detailed information. This is not medical advice and you should not make any medication or treatment changes without consulting your doctor.