



# Westbury Group Practice

## Advice for travellers with diabetes mellitus

### The journey

Be prepared and take adequate supplies of insulin, syringes, blood glucose strips. Carry necessary equipment in hand luggage where it can be easily accessed. Have a means of disposing of needles. If prone to travel sickness take an anti-emetic; vomiting can predispose to hypoglycaemia. Carry diabetic identification and inform travel companions of diabetic status.

### Climate

Insulin absorption may be affected in a warm climate. Maintain a high fluid intake to compensate for loss. Ensure safe storage of glucose strips to maintain accurate readings. Keep insulin out of direct sunlight and in colder climates do not let it freeze.

### Activities

Some people are more active on holiday, others less so. It is important that diet, oral glycaemics and insulin are adjusted to compensate.

### Food and drink

The diabetic traveller has to be extra cautious to prevent infections which can cause gastrointestinal upset. Vomiting and diarrhoea can lead to hypoglycaemia.

### Insulin schedules

All international flights east or west involve crossing time-zones. Some practical advice on administering insulin is as follows:

- plan in advance
- talk with a specialist
- take adequate equipment and medication supplies
- take adequate carbohydrate or glucose supplies since delays can alter mealtimes
- MONITOR sugar levels especially on long journeys.
- be prepared for delays
- plan a schedule in advance but be prepared to alter it later if delays occur.

### Insulin storage

Although some manufacturers state that insulin

barefoot; wear protective footwear on the sand and in the water. Avoid sunburn to feet and legs by using protective sunscreens or covering up.

### **Skin care**

Prevent dry skin by using moisturisers, especially on heels which crack easily. Moist skin can lead to infection. Take first aid kit for minor injuries. Examine feet regularly and seek medical attention if any problems arise.

### **Useful information Sources**

#### **Diabetes U.K.** (formerly The British Diabetic Association)

10 Queen Ann Street,  
London W1M 0BD

Main switchboard for general/administrative queries (Tel: 020 7323 1531)

[www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

Careline:- Tel:- 0207 636 6112

Diabetes UK Travel Guide 0800 585088 For assistance with specific concerns related to diabetes.

Leaflets and information including 'Travel Guide' to the more popular countries visited abroad, with advice pertinent to the needs of diabetics.

#### **Frio UK Ltd.**

PO Box 10

Haverfordwest SA62 5YG

Tel: 01437 741700 Fax: 01437 741781 [www.friouk.com](http://www.friouk.com)

Company that sells Insulin Travel wallets. Light and compact, reusable, activated by cold water only and not refrigeration

#### **Medic-Alert Foundation**

Freepost

1 Bridge Wharf

156 Caledonian Road

London N1 9BR

Tel: 020 7833 3034 or 0800 581420 [www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk)

Another good specific site for diabetes is [www.diabetes-travel.co.uk](http://www.diabetes-travel.co.uk)

### **Answering some commonly asked questions**

(these were taken from the Diabetes UK website on [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk))

Q. I am worried about being stopped at customs with my insulin and syringes. What is the best way of proving that I have diabetes and need to carry this equipment?

A. You can ask your GP or a member of your diabetes team for a covering letter. Alternatively, you can apply to Diabetes UK for an insulin user's card. The cost of the card is £5.00. For further information use contact details as above.

Q. Can taking a blood glucose meter through the X ray machine at the airport be dangerous?

A. There is absolutely no problem with putting your blood glucose monitor through the X-ray machine at the airport. However, it has been known for customs officials to take the meter apart or want to remove the batteries. A covering letter from the doctor may help in this situation.