

Travelling

Whether it's far away or a 20 minute trip down the highway, travelling can be a great source of adventure, relaxation and recreation – a way for us to get a “break from the everyday”. On the flip side, travel can also be a source of stress and extra anxiety. The change in routine and unfamiliar environment may cause you to experience feelings of disorientation, anxiety or confusion. All is not lost, however, as there are a number of things to keep in mind that may help make this a more successful experience. Early, well-informed planning is the key to ensuring a more pleasurable trip. Ask yourself:

- What are your strengths and limitations? Can you manage all the aspects of the trip being planned? Do you feel comfortable asking for help for the things you can't?
- Where are you going and for how long? What may be the best way to travel to get there?
- Where will you be staying? Do you feel comfortable sharing your diagnosis so others you may be staying with can be supportive?
- What will you be doing when you get there?
- What resources or special things will you need? Many airlines offer special services for the 'disabled', (e.g., portering service) that may help enhance your trip.
- What can be done in case of emergency? What medical services are accessible where you are?

- How well do you handle the unexpected or 'crisis' situations? Will you be able to ask for help from strangers if need be?

While a certain amount of optimism is helpful, please reflect on “what you would do if...?” Realistically, your actions and responses may change while on the trip as you cope with new surroundings and routines, even if these are trips to familiar places (family homes or favourite vacation places). Your thoughtful answers to the above questions can help guide your trip planning and help you feel more confident going forward. Keep your optimistic outlook; just inject it with some reality and cautionary planning.

Warning Signs Against Travel

As a general rule, the more advanced your disease is, the more difficult travel will be, but everyone is unique. Consider the following as flags that you should avoid or limit your travel:

- Frequent feelings of confusion or disorientation and /or high anxiety in familiar surroundings
- Wanting to go home when away from home for short periods of time
- Suspicious or paranoid thoughts
- Continence management difficulties
- Feeling teary, anxious and/or wanting to withdraw in crowded, noisy settings

If you experience any of these flags, give serious thought to the necessity of the trip. If you choose to go ahead with plans, be prepared that these responses may increase in frequency and severity during the course of your trip.

General Travel Tips

- Consider travelling with a partner.
- Consider a short trip, if unsure how a longer trip will be tolerated.
- Develop a list of destinations and contact information to share with family members so they can reach you in case of an emergency.
- Register with the MedicAlert Safely Home program (if travelling in Canada).
- Try to keep things simple; avoid busy, fast-paced sight-seeing trips or busy, loud environments.
- If flying, notify the airline you are traveling on. You may be able to take advantage of special medical assistance services.
- Keep all important possessions, passports, money, schedules and tickets in a safe place on your person or give to your travel partner to hold.
- Take along a “carry on bag” with a change of clothes, medications, wipes etc.
- When in hotels, leave the bathroom light on to aid in orientation in the middle of the night.
- Allow for extra time. Avoid temptation to ‘cram’ several activities into one day. Plan for a single activity instead, with ‘back-up plans’.

Even the best laid plans can go awry, but with careful planning and the ability to be flexible and move on to “Plan B or C or D” you can reduce the extra stress that comes along when things don’t go as expected.

Travel Checklist

- Identification (in clothing, wallet; baggage tags)
- List of medications, prescription numbers and pharmacy phone number
- Stocked supply of current medications
- Health and Travel Insurance
- Trip Itinerary for yourself complete with reservation confirmation numbers
- Trip Itinerary for family so they can reach you
- Recent photograph left with family
- Passports
- Emergency kit – complete with change of clothes and snacks
- Night Lights, door stop, alarm or chime
- Favourite items, e.g., pillow, pajamas, robe or slippers
 - Relaxation items, e.g., music, books, or games to pass the time
- “Occupied” sign for bathroom

Depending on the nature of your trip, not all of the above items may be necessary. Please consider what you may find useful for your situation.

If you require further information, please contact us or visit our website.

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