

## Frequently Asked Questions - Travel

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If you are planning an extended trip, it would be a good idea to discuss travel plans with your gastroenterologist or clinical team. Ask for a written summary of your condition that includes a list of your medications (generic and brand names), results of any recent investigations, and a management plan that informs you (or another doctor) what to do in the event of a flare-up.

Always take your doctors' details with you, including contact numbers and e-mail addresses. If possible, see if your doctor can recommend an appropriate contact (name and phone numbers) in the area/s that you will be visiting.

### How Does My Crohn's And Colitis Affect Travel Insurance?

As the passport office states: **'If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel.'**

Make sure to arrange travel insurance before you purchase your tickets. That way, if you happen to become ill prior to departure, your travel insurance should cover any cancellation fees. Be aware that not all insurance companies provide cover for pre-existing medical conditions, and those that do still apply a number of exclusions or have excess charges and higher premiums. If you already have private health insurance, start with your own health fund to determine the level of cover you will have when you are out of the country. You might need to amend your current policy or look for alternatives that provide cover should you require medical treatment abroad or have to return to Australia for medical treatment before the scheduled end of your trip.

### Does Crohn's And Colitis Affect Immunisations?

You might need to obtain certain immunisations before you start your journey, depending on where you are planning to travel. It is best to discuss this with a travel-medicine specialist who can provide up-to-date requirements for your specific destinations. You should plan this consultation **at least eight weeks prior to travel** to allow time for vaccinations to take effect and to deal with any possible side effects before you leave.

Be sure to inform your travel-medicine specialist about all the medications that you are taking as some vaccinations (live vaccines) are not compatible with the medications used to treat IBD. It is not yet fully understood whether those taking medications that regulate or lower the immune response such as corticosteroids and azathioprine respond to live vaccines in the normal manner. In this situation, it is necessary to discuss the risks of stopping the medication versus those of not being vaccinated.

### Can I Travel With My Medications?

Where possible, take enough medication with you for the entire trip plus a little bit extra to cover for any delays. This should include regular maintenance medications, any medications required for flare-ups, and any appliances that you might need during that trip. Your doctor can write 'REG24' on a prescription which will allow you to pick up several months' supply at once.

Current customs regulations restrict passengers from travelling with more than three months' supply of medication. If you are planning to travel for longer than three months, you can obtain further information from the Australian Customs Service website at [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au).

Medicare Australia also has an information line to answer your questions about travelling overseas with PBS medicines. The PBS Medicines enquiry line is 1800 500 147.

You can read about restrictions on [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au).

Remember to keep your medications in their original containers and to bring along a copy of your prescription. This will allow Customs to confirm that the medications were indeed prescribed for you. Where possible, pack medications in your hand luggage to reduce the risk of loss or delay in transit. Note too that some non-prescription medications cannot be brought into some countries; have your doctor list these and check restrictions relating to the country of your destination.

Wherever and whenever you travel overseas, it is always a good idea to check the requirements of your destination countries regarding injectable prescription meds to avoid problems. For instance, Japan requires a special permit for travellers to bring in injectable drugs (which could include the biologics used for IBD). Consider checking requirements with the relevant embassies before you travel.

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Current travel restrictions regarding hand luggage state that: 'Containers of liquids, aerosols or gels in your carry-on baggage must be 100 millilitres or less. All containers must be sealed in a transparent, one-litre plastic bag. You are allowed only one plastic bag.'

Although prescribed medications are exempt from current hand-luggage restrictions, you will need to supply the appropriate documentation as discussed above.

Should you require any additional prescribed medications while you are away, be aware that you might not be able to get all your medications in some countries. You should check this out before you go, and ask your doctor or travel-medicine specialist for the names of any alternative medications if required.

Keep in mind that when travelling in other countries:

- you might have to pay for the full cost of your medications, especially in a country that Australia does not have Reciprocal Health Care Agreements (RHCA) with
- an RHCA country can still deny access to some medications, especially the expensive biologics
- travel insurance is not going to cover routine supply of medications.

Some medications need to be permanently kept in a strictly controlled environment with a cool temperature. Check with your pharmacist whether any of your medications and/or supplies require special transport or storage arrangements.