# Tips for Making Travel Safe, Enjoyable and Worry-Free With Asthma

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## Precautions to Take When Traveling With Asthma

As the seasons shift, the air warms, and holiday time approaches, it's natural to have travel on the mind. When you live with asthma, that excitement can mix with worry as you imagine worst case scenarios where your asthma symptoms get the better of you while you're away from home.

Luckily, there is plenty you can do to prevent problems, no matter where you're going or how you get there. Aside from the right travel insurance and a medical check-up, you'll need to take some specific preventative measures and consider creative solutions to potential hiccups in your journey. Just a bit more time and attention now can bring a lot more comfort and enjoyment when you're traveling with asthma.

### Top Tips for Avoiding Emergencies

The mere thought of dealing with an asthma attack in a closed vehicle can make you anxious, but taking extra precautionary measures will help calm your mind and prevent any discomforts from blossoming into full-blown emergencies.

#### Keep Medication Handy

Since an asthma attack can strike at any time, you'll want to keep your asthma medication close by at *all* times. Pack both your quick-relief medication (rescue inhaler) and your long-term control medication in your purse or carry-on luggage, so you won't have any obstacle to overcome if you need to use them. If you'll be checking bags, keep in mind there is a chance they will be lost in transit; keeping any or all of your medication in your suitcase is a risk that's not worth taking.

#### Play It Safe With Documentation

You never know what sort of questions, concerns or resistance you'll face en route, especially if you're traveling to a foreign country, so have your doctor write a letter that includes your diagnosis, prescriptions (including generic names for your medications), and any necessary equipment you need to manage your disease.

#### Invest in a Portable Nebulizer

It's always a good idea to shrink down your necessities into travel-sized packages when you travel. Just as travel-sized toothpaste, shampoo and soaps are handy on the road, so is a portable nebulizer: it is easier to pack than the full-size version, and many can be plugged into a car's cigarette lighter (just be sure to bring an adapter if you're traveling abroad).

If you can't manage a nebulizer, be sure to pack an inhaler with a spacer, which can be almost as effective.

You should try to bring along any asthma devices you might need, even if you rarely use them or have never needed them before. Travel can bring physical and psychological stress, and as you know, stress can trigger symptoms.

Since asthma is more difficult to predict under these conditions, arm yourself with all of your anti-asthma arsenal.

**Extra Precautions for Your Road Trip**

As the weather gets warmer and the driving conditions more comfortable, opportunities for road trips abound. Unfortunately, spending lots of time in the car can leave you vulnerable to asthma triggers, so be sure to prepare well — and use your car's features to your advantage.

- **Clean the car before you leave.** Dust mites, pollen particles and mold can build up on upholstery and in the air vents of your car, so wipe them off and flush them out before you hit the road. In fact, if you can, have your car professionally cleaned — that way, you won't have to expose yourself to any harsh cleaners or the dust that can be kicked up into the air.
- **Use the air conditioning.** Your air conditioning can help you in two ways. First, you can clean out a good deal of allergens by opening all the windows and running the air for 10 or 15 minutes. And when you're driving through high pollen levels or in heavy traffic, keeping the windows rolled up and the air conditioning on will keep the inside air quality up.
- **Time your travel.** Protecting against asthma flare-ups on the road involves smart route planning. Keep an eye on pollen counts, rush hour traffic times, and construction zones, and avoid the worst stretches wherever possible. If smog levels are high, keep the windows closed and air on.

Traveling by bus can be tricky since you don't know how often the upholstery is cleaned, or what sorts of triggers the other passengers might be bringing on with them. If you're planning a long bus trip, mention your asthma to the driver — if the worst happens, they could stop the bus so you can get a breath of fresh air. Be sure to keep your rescue inhaler ready, in any case.

**Beware of Changes to Your Routine**

If you're going to be staying somewhere new, you can't count on the place to have all the comforts and conditions that you take for granted in your own abode. It's always worth informing your hosts of your needs well before you arrive.

Request a thorough room cleaning, and if you'll be staying on the beach or in the forest, ask them to kindly air out the room in advance. While they're at it, ask if they could remove any air fresheners that might trigger breathing trouble. If food allergies are a concern, now is the time to alert the kitchen.

It can take months to get rid of any allergens or pollutants completely (smoke residue and pet dander can linger for months), so try to stay in a room that has never hosted pets or smokers, and that's free from mold. If that can't be guaranteed, you'll need an extra line of defense: bring your own hypoallergenic pillow cases and sheets to ensure you won't be breathing in any particles that could be problematic to how you sleep with asthma. It's also not a bad idea to have another accommodation lined-up, just in case the triggers are overwhelming.

Don't worry too much about bothering anyone with your asthma concerns, or being too "high-maintenance" — this is a matter of health, not personal preference, and people will understand. You can do your part by bringing any specialty items you need to stay comfortable, informing your traveling companions of your asthma action plan, and balancing your activity with plenty of rest.