



Your Cancer Travel Checklist: What to Know When Traveling for Treatment or Fun

Whether travel is for treatment or pleasure,
planning ahead is essential

Traveling when you're living with cancer — whether you're heading to a treatment or just taking time off for fun — may take some planning.

If you're traveling for treatment, you may be juggling appointments, living away from home, and running your life in the background. If you're traveling for fun, you'll need to ensure you're feeling your best and make contingency plans for your health and medications.

We've compiled some travel check lists to help you prepare for any type of travel. We've got lists for planning and for packing to help you feel ready and in control.

Pre-travel checklist when traveling for treatment

ASKING YOUR CARE TEAM ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT

- How long will you need to stay at your treatment destination?
- Will you need to quarantine or take extra precautions when you arrive or return home?
- What timing works best in your treatment cycle for traveling (for example, which days you're likely to feel least fatigued or nauseated)?
- Are there specific risks to look out for while traveling — like infection, blood clots, or anemia?

LINING UP HOME SUPPORT

- Childcare**
Arrange childcare if you'll be away during school runs, activities, or bedtime routines.
- Mail**
Ask a neighbor or friend to pick up your mail and packages, or place a hold request with the post office.
- Bills**
Automate bill payments online or schedule them ahead to avoid missed due dates.
- House keys:**
Identify a backup contact at home (a sibling, close friend, or neighbor) who has a set of keys that can handle unexpected issues while you're away.

PLANNING FOR LODGING AND COSTS

- Check with your treatment center or the American Cancer Society for discounted lodging programs. [JoesHouse.org](https://www.joeshouse.org) also offers assistance. Don't forget to ask about parking costs at the facility and the hotel or home where you're staying during treatment. Explore transportation and meal assistance too — help exists, and it can make a big difference.

SCOUTING OUT LOCAL PHARMACIES AND OTHER RESOURCES AT YOUR DESTINATION

- Look up nearby pharmacies, urgent care centers, and hospitals. Save addresses and phone numbers in your phone and keep a paper copy. If you're traveling with your pet, find a local vet and make sure you bring your pet's medical records too.

Time off checklist

Whether you're heading off on vacation, visiting family and friends, or traveling to a special event, a little planning can make the experience more joyful and less stressful.

Getting the green light from your care team

Ask if it's safe to travel now, what timing works best in your treatment cycle, and if there are risks (infection, blood clots, anemia) to keep in mind.

Finding out whether there are travel restrictions related to any of your medications

If you're taking certain controlled drugs for cancer-related pain, you might need a doctor's note to explain why you have them.

Asking your care team about vaccinations and precautions

Confirm that your routine shots are current and ask if you'll need additional vaccines based on your destination. Talk through what infection-prevention steps make sense for you while traveling — from masking to avoiding crowded spaces — and whether there are particular risks (like flu, COVID, or other illnesses) you should be aware of at your destination.

Planning travel dates around your "good days"

Keep track of when side effects take place after treatment, and try to book your trip during the window when you feel strongest. It's also important to discuss timing with your doctor, because your risk for infection may be higher during certain periods following treatment.

Checking your insurance — and considering travel coverage

Before you leave, call your health insurance provider to ask if your plan covers care in another state or country as well as medical evacuation, if needed. If you're traveling abroad, remember that many countries have public health systems, and visitors may be expected to pay out-of-pocket for treatment unless they have supplemental travel insurance. Even a short hospital visit can become very expensive without coverage. Buying travel insurance can give you peace of mind that emergency care, hospital stays, or even a medical evacuation would be covered if needed.

Scouting out medical facilities near your destination

Look up hospitals, urgent care, and pharmacies in advance so you know where to go if something unexpected comes up.

Requesting pre-boarding and a wheelchair at the airport

Traveling can be exhausting when you're healthy, let alone while you're undergoing cancer treatment. Depending on how you feel, you may want to arrange preboarding. Although most airline staff will allow you to preboard if you're undergoing cancer treatment, you may also want to request a note from your doctor to be sure. Plan in advance and request a wheelchair at the airport. If you don't need it, you can decline the help, but it can be difficult to get wheelchair support at the last minute.

Travel packing list

Your medical records

Check with the treatment center about any medical records they may want you to bring. Even if you're traveling for vacation, you should always carry lists of your care providers, your medications, and a one-page summary of your diagnosis and treatments. Keep both a paper copy and a digital version on your phone.

Everyday essentials

Phone chargers, plug adapters (for travel abroad), glasses, hearing aids (with spare batteries), toothbrush, alcohol-free mouthwash, and unscented lotion — the little things that make daily life easier. Consider bringing your essentials kit with you to treatment appointments, because you never know if you might be delayed.

Entertainment toolkit

Download books, movies, music, and podcasts. Toss in headphones, chargers, and maybe a deck of cards or a favorite magazine. You'll need these for long travel days as well as for hospital waiting rooms if you're traveling for treatment.

A touch of home

If you're traveling for treatment, you may want to bring something comforting — a pillow, blanket, or framed photo — to make your temporary space feel more like yours.

Medications (and extras)

Pack all medications in your carry-on and bring a few extra doses in case of delays. Check airline and airport rules for liquids, injectables and controlled substances (pain medications). Ask your doctor for a note if needed.

Comfortable clothing

Soft layers, slip-on shoes, compression or cozy socks, and a wrap or hoodie for chilly clinics, airports or airplanes.

Germ-fighting gear

Hand sanitizer, wipes, and masks for high-touch spaces and crowded settings.

Special care items

Sunscreen is especially important if your medications make you sun-sensitive, compression stockings if you are experiencing swelling (known as lymphedema), or a special card if you have implanted radiation seeds.

Hydration helpers

A refillable water bottle for the plane or car, and reminders to sip often. Staying hydrated helps with fatigue and blood clot prevention. Try to avoid caffeine and alcohol.