

Living with Pulmonary Fibrosis

Preparing for Travel



Centre of Research Excellence in
Pulmonary Fibrosis



Lung
Foundation
Australia

Preparing for Travel

Being diagnosed with Pulmonary Fibrosis doesn't mean that you need to give up the things you love to do, including travel. You may need to do things a bit differently and do some more planning than you are used to, but it is important to maintain the things you love in your life. So, before you start planning a holiday, talk to your treating healthcare team to understand the key things you need to consider before planning a trip, including how you are going to get there and making sure you are safe when you are away from home.



At the moment, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing a lot of uncertainty about travel. Government regulations change from week to week, which makes planning difficult. You will need to speak to your treating healthcare team to get specific advice about travelling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A TRIP

Location location location

Carefully consider where you want to go to make sure you get the most out of your holiday. Some things to think of include:



The terrain. Don't push yourself too much while you are on holiday. If you have trouble walking up hills at home, a holiday in hilly terrain might not be suitable.



The altitude. High altitudes might make it harder for you to breathe, so you may need additional oxygen.



The climate. Very hot or very cold climates may affect your breathing and cause symptoms such as coughing.



The schedule. Organised tours take the stress out of planning but they may try and fit a lot of activity into a small number of days, which may be tiring.



Travel time. You should consider how long it will take to get to your destination and the number of connections you will need to make.



Accessibility. It is important to select a destination that has good transport links, ready access to medical care and that your hotel is close to amenities.

TRAVELLING OVERSEAS – IS IT SAFE?

If you are thinking about travelling overseas, it is important that you consider all of the possible complications including what could happen if:

- You become ill while you are away

Such as, available medical facilities in the area, out-of-pocket cost of appointments or hospital admissions, what your travel or medical insurance will cover if you are unable to complete the trip and need to return home, and if you are unable to get back home.

- There is a COVID-19 or other outbreak at your destination

Before you travel, make sure you check the Australian Government requirements for travel and consider the vaccination and quarantine requirements both at your destination and at home.

Make sure you talk to your treating healthcare team to evaluate your personal risk and see if overseas travel is suitable for you.

BE PREPARED

Once you have decided where you are going, make a plan for all the important things you need to pack or organise before you go:

- Sufficient medication
- Emergency supply of antibiotics
- Vaccinations
- Sufficient oxygen for your trip if you use oxygen therapy
- Take out travel insurance
 - You must declare Pulmonary Fibrosis as a pre-existing condition, so it is worth shopping around before picking one
- Print out or save copies of important medical information to take with you such as a list of medication, details of your oxygen prescription, details of your travel insurance and contact details for your treating healthcare team.

FLYING TO YOUR DESTINATION

There are some things you will need to organise ahead of time and others that you should try and do whilst on the plane.



Before your trip

- You may need to undergo some tests to determine whether you need oxygen on the plane – even if you don't usually use oxygen therapy
 - One of the tests is called the high-altitude simulation test. It is not widely available, and you may have to wait a while before you can take the test, so it's important you plan for it and book it in early. You should also give your healthcare team sufficient time to see you afterwards to discuss the results.
- You may require a medical-clearance form signed by your doctor for international and some domestic flights – the completed form is often required two weeks before you travel. Make sure you get your form directly from your airline as they are not all the same.
 - It is recommended that you book through a travel agency rather than online so you can be sure that you get the right forms early enough. **DO NOT BOOK** before you have completed your high-altitude simulation test as it can be much more expensive to add oxygen afterwards.



On the plane

- Make sure you perform regular leg exercises, drink plenty of fluids – but no alcohol – and consider wearing a mask during the flight.

The things you need to consider may change over time as your health changes. What worked for your last holiday may not work for your next. So, make sure that you re-evaluate every trip when you start planning.

Travelling with oxygen therapy

If you use oxygen therapy, there is no reason you can't travel, you just need to plan ahead.



TRAVELLING BY CAR OR CARAVAN

Make sure your oxygen cylinders or portable concentrator are secured in the backseat foot space and that your cylinder or concentrator remains upright at all times. If you are travelling with other people, don't let them smoke in the car.

- If you have oxygen cylinders:
 - Ensure you can see the regulator at all times so you know when you need to change it over
 - Plan for enough oxygen to account for any unforeseen diversions on your trip
 - Plot your trip based on where you can swap or refill your cylinders.
- If you have a portable concentrator, make sure it is plugged in using the car-charging kit and/or carry a spare battery.



TRAVELLING ON A CRUISE

- Take a portable concentrator as you won't be able to take enough oxygen cylinders to last the whole trip.
 - Tell the cruise line that you have a portable oxygen concentrator and will need an uninterrupted power supply.
- Make sure the portable concentrator is suitable for your oxygen prescription.
- Ensure the cruise line has oxygen supplies on board in case of an equipment malfunction.
- You might also need a medical-clearance form signed by your doctor.



TRAVELLING BY PLANE

- Each airline varies, so make sure you talk to your provider about their specific rules and regulations with regard to oxygen therapy. You will usually need your doctor to fill in some forms within two weeks of your travel date, so make sure you check what is required before you book your flight and plan accordingly.
- Depending on the airline, you have a couple of choices to take oxygen with you in-flight:
 - Take your own portable concentrator or rent one for the trip. Make sure that it is Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved and check with your airline as each one allows different types of concentrators.
 - Airlines do not let you use their power supply on board, so you need to make sure that you have enough batteries to cover 1.5 X the travel time (for example, a 4-hour flight will require enough oxygen supply for 6 hours).

OR

- Although rare, some airlines can provide you with oxygen cylinders on board. Some airlines provide this for free, while others may charge fees. It is important that you shop around when you are buying your flights as not all airlines are the same. Be careful of low-cost and code-shared airlines (where your ticket is with one airline but the plane is from another).

LUNG FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA SERVICES



Information and Support Team



Lung disease information resources



Education webinars



Support groups



Peer-to-peer connections



Referral to pulmonary rehabilitation and Lungs in Action exercise programs



E-newsletter

EXTERNAL LINKS

Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation www.pulmonaryfibrosis.org

Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation www.cpff.ca

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