



Planning to travel? Think about...

- + Checking/updating your haemophilia treatment plan...
- + Getting good travel and medical insurance...
- + Finding your nearest haemophilia centre...
- + What immunisations or medications you will need...
- + Organising your official doctors' letters...
- + Ensuring you have all the treatment you may need...
- + Getting your green card and/or MedicAlert tag...

Topic card: planning to travel

Travel is an essential part of modern living – whether it's for business or for pleasure. Travelling can be exciting, invigorating, and enlightening, but it can also be exhausting, stressful and disorientating. The secret of successful travel is all in the planning – whether you have haemophilia or not. Even a short break should be carefully thought through, and for those with haemophilia, planning for travel should be systematic, thorough, and started as early as possible.

Getting properly insured

- Buying good travel insurance with excellent medical cover **is essential** if you have haemophilia – **it is not a luxury**. Emergency treatment abroad is not only expensive, it may not be of the same standard if you are inadequately insured. You may be surprised just how much a course of clotting factor treatment costs if you are forced to pay for it yourself. And an air ambulance to return you home can cost anything up to £45,000.
- Do not rely on your credit card accident cover, or home or private health insurance to cover you for all medical emergencies abroad. The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), which replaced the E111 form in 2006, entitles you to only basic care within the European Economic Area countries and Switzerland and may not entitle you to the full costs of haemophilia treatment. **Having an EHIC card does not mean you are insured!**

Top tips! +

1. Always inform anyone treating you that you have a bleeding disorder.
2. Always have an up-to-date treatment plan that can be given to anyone who needs it.

- Ideally, you should strive to purchase the best travel and medical insurance policy you can afford, and are advised to inform the insurer that you have a bleeding disorder and to discuss the level of cover and any exclusions directly with the insurer – not just with the travel agent.
- The level of cover, should include all the basics recommended by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (see box) as well as the cost of any treatment you are taking with you and all the costs associated with treating spontaneous bleeds locally.
- Some travel insurers will not insure people with haemophilia or other pre-existing medical conditions, but there are plenty that do. A list of these can be obtained from The Haemophilia Society.
- Everyone in the party will usually need to be insured with the same company. We recommend discussing this with the insurer.

Finding a local haemophilia centre

- The World Federation of Hemophilia (www.wfh.org) produces a comprehensive and up-to-date listing of over 900 haemophilia treatment centres and national haemophilia organisations in more than 100 countries. Why not consider contacting one before you travel?

Getting immunised

- For some destinations, you will need to be immunised and/or take medications such as antimalaria drugs. This is important, so seek advice on what you might need from your family doctor.
- Haemophilia treatment centres will be able to advise on whether it is safe to have the recommended vaccinations and, if they are to be given intramuscularly, whether additional cover may be needed.
- Plan well ahead. It can take up to 8 weeks to complete a course of immunisations.

Organising your official doctors' letters

- You will need two types of official letter from a doctor to travel abroad: one for healthcare professionals (in case treatment is needed) and one for customs (detailing the medications being carried).
- Your haemophilia treatment centre will need to prepare these well in advance. Please plan ahead and give the centre plenty of notice – at least a few weeks would be ideal.
- The letters should be dated no earlier than 30 days before your departure date.

Green cards and MedicAlert tags

- Always carry a green card listing details of your medical condition.
- Wear a medical identification bracelet or necklace such as those available from MedicAlert (www.medicalert.org.uk).

What about passports and visas?

Remember...

- It takes at least 3 weeks to process a passport application.
- Some countries require a visa for entry. These can take a considerable amount of time to obtain.
- People with HIV may need to apply for a special visa and supply additional documentation.

Travelling with medication...

- **Take sufficient clotting factor and other treatments/equipment you may require to cover you while you are away.** This is very important as not all countries offer the same level of medical care as the UK, and your type of clotting factor may not be available locally. If in doubt, over-compensate.
- Inform your airline, ferry company or tour operator that you have haemophilia as they may offer special facilities such as refrigeration in transit.
- All medications should be carried as hand luggage and kept as cool as possible. New security measures about carrying medicines on planes have come into force. Details can be found on The Haemophilia Society's website (www.haemophilia.org.uk).
- Keep equipment, factor and other medication in its original packaging.
- Factor and infusion kits should be packed in a clear plastic bag inside a cool bag together with the prescription relating to it and the doctor's letter explaining why it is needed.

Useful translations

- Translations of some key haemophilia-related phrases are available from the Haemophilia Life web site (www.haemophilialife.co.uk).

What should all general medical insurance cover?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office recommends that general medical cover, as part of an overall travel insurance policy, should include:

- At least £1 million cover for Europe
- At least £2 million cover for the rest of the world
- 24-hour emergency/medical cover
- The cost of relatives flying out and back and their accommodation
- The cost of bringing you back to the UK

Packing checklist

Don't forget! All original documentation (e.g. travel/medical insurance and doctor's letters) should be carried as hand luggage, with copies placed in a suitcase.

Medication and toiletries

- Anti-malaria tablets
- Antiseptic wipes
- Cream for treating sunburn
- Cream to soothe bites and stings
- Clotting factor (in a cooler or cooler bag)
- Insect repellent
- Medication for common ailments
- Prescription medicines
- Sharps bin
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 15 for adults, SPF 25 for children)
- Water purification tablets

Documentation

- Copies of prescriptions
- Doctor's letters
- Immunisation certificates
- European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)
- Medical insurance documentation
- Passports and visas
- Printouts of contact details for haemophilia treatment centres
- Printouts of useful translations (available from this web site)
- Green card and/or MedicAlert tag
- Currency/travellers cheques
- Phrase book