

Tips for travelling with Sjögren's

By Bridget Crampton Helpline Team Leader

As we begin to look towards Spring and warmer days, our thoughts turn towards sun, sea and holidays...lovely!

With this in mind I have put together a few travel tips and suggestions.

Insurance

This is vital for all travellers, but especially so for people with health problems. Below is a list of companies that have either been recommended to me, or who I have spoken to and found them well informed and helpful. There are others to be found online and many banks also provide travel cover.

- Insurance Choice **01926 460922**
- The Post Office Travel Insurance **0330 123 3690**
- Tesco Travel Insurance **0345 293 9474**
- Planet Earth Travel Insurance **0161 439 0333**
- Avanti Travel Insurance **0800 888 6195**
- Stay Sure Medical Travel Insurance **0808 281 2967**

All of these companies have websites and can easily be found by Googling them.

Vaccinations

These are necessary for some destinations. Most vaccines are safe for people with Sjögren's, but Yellow Fever is a live vaccine and carries a little more risk. For all vaccines it is best to check with your GP or rheumatologist first.

Medication

You will need to order your medication in time for your holiday, and extra if you are taking a longer break. Take enough for your stay and a little extra, just in case. If you take a lot of medication, or have a lot of health issues, you could ask your GP to write a covering letter to take with you. This would help if you need to see a doctor while you are away. Pack medication in your hand luggage if you are flying. That way if your luggage goes astray, you still have your medication and eyedrops etc. Keep it in the original containers, with the labels on, and take a copy of your repeat prescription with you. Liquids can be taken, and can exceed the normal quantity limit, but they must be in original labelled bottles, and you may be asked to taste it. I find it easiest to put all of this together in a separate bag, and have a small purse containing what I need for the journey in my handbag. This

has never been a problem for me. If you have regular problems with eye infections, thrush etc. it is wise to take treatment for these with you. You can see your GP or your pharmacist can help with this.

During the flight

The main problem during a flight is the dry, recycled cabin atmosphere. These are a few things you can do to help;

- Drink plenty of water, you can buy this once you have gone through security.
- Turn off the air vents above your seat, they will be blowing out dry recycled air, which will quickly make you dry too!
- Put Nozoil up your nose, and wrap a scarf or pashmina around your mouth and nose and you will then be rebreathing your own moisture.
- Put in your eyedrops or ointment, and use an eye mask if you feel this helps. You may want to try and sleep.
- Lip balm, mouth spray and a facial mist spray may all help.
- On a long flight you might want to wear flight socks to help your circulation and remember to move your legs from time to time.
- Some people take a low dose aspirin before a long flight, but you need to discuss this with your GP first.

On holiday

This is the best bit, but we still need to take care of ourselves. A high factor sunscreen is essential. Factor 30 at least and factor 50+ if you have problems with sun rash or sun allergy. There are a number of good products available and most people have their favourites. Most can be bought over the counter and there are a number of high factor creams for the face also available. For



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people with Lupus rash and sun allergy there are some products which are available on prescription. These are also available over the counter and online.

These include;

- Sun Sense SPF 50 and Sun Sense Daily Face Factor 50
- Ultrasun SPF 50 and 30 also Ultrasun lip balm.
- Children's sun products are very good, but beware, a few of them are tinted green Not a good look!
- Don't forget a good moisturising after sun cream, there are lots available or gentle soothing creams such as Aveeno can help to stop you drying out too much.
- Covering up is important too, loose cotton garments, wide brimmed hats and good quality wraparound sunglasses will all help.
- Remember to have eyedrops with you and put them in often.
- Also mouth gels and sprays etc, you will dry out faster in the heat.
- Keep drinking plenty of fluids, little and often works well. Always have water with you.
- For people who struggle with dry air in hotel rooms and caravans etc, a travel humidifier could help.
- Boneco make a good one which just needs a small bottle of water and somewhere to plug it in. It is supplied with a set of plugs for worldwide use and costs around £40. It is easily available online from a number of suppliers.

Well, that's it... You're good to go!!
Have a wonderful time.