

Travel Tips:

**A Guide for People Living with
Chronic Kidney Disease**



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Travel Tips: A Guide for People Living with Chronic Kidney Disease

Traveling can require a bit more thought when you have chronic kidney disease (CKD), but rest assured, it's very manageable – and can be a fun and fantastic experience!

CKD means your kidneys aren't functioning at full capacity, which is why, when you're planning a trip, it's important to plan a little more carefully.

Traveling is Good for You

Going on a trip is not just about exploring new places or visiting with friends and family who do not live nearby. It's also incredibly helpful for your mental and emotional well-being.

And people who are living with CKD may find that stepping away from their usual routine and ongoing medical care can be truly wonderful. It offers a chance to unwind, enjoy yourself, and have fun experiences. Travel can lift your spirits and be very exciting.

Just remember, it's important to plan your trips well and to be mindful of any limitations associated with your illness – that's how you can make sure your travel experience is as rewarding as the fun places you visit!

Pre-Travel Considerations

When you are living with CKD, getting ready for a trip means some extra steps to make sure you stay healthy. It's important to speak with your doctor about your travel plans, think about how managing your CKD will fit into your trip, and make sure you have everything you need.

Whether adjusting your treatment, packing your medications, or choosing the right travel insurance, taking care of these details before you leave can help you have a smooth and enjoyable trip.

Talk to Your Healthcare Provider

Before planning your trip, you should talk to your healthcare provider and dialysis center staff about your travel plans. They can assess your current health, adjust your treatment plan, and provide information and recommendations for your specific needs.



Tips:

- Schedule a pre-travel checkup to discuss your travel plans.
- Ask about adjusting your treatment plan while you are away.
- Get a medical summary and a letter from your healthcare provider explaining your medical conditions.
- Make sure that you are up to date on all vaccines that your healthcare provider recommends.



Preparation

Preparing for travel means more than just packing your bags. You'll need to consider how having CKD can affect your travel plans. This means thinking about your medications, dialysis schedules, dietary needs, and how to handle any health issues while away from home.



Tips

- Start planning early—at least 6 to 8 weeks before your trip.
- Organize your medications and pack them in your carry-on luggage.
- Research and make a list of locations of medical facilities at your destination.
- Plan your travel schedule around your dialysis needs.
- Visit **dialysisfinder.com** to find dialysis locations in the US and **globaldialysis.com** for international travel.
- Work with your dialysis team to have home dialysis supplies ordered and shipped so they're available when you arrive at your destination. Contact staff at your destination to ensure delivery and safe storage.
- Contact your airline or other transportation provider to discuss how to travel with your dialysis machine.
- If traveling by air, check the Transportation Security Administration website (**[tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/medical](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/medical)**) for information about medical items that are allowed on an aircraft.
- Discuss with your airline or other transportation provider about access to a space where you can do dialysis if the need should arise. For example, delays during which you can't leave the airplane or during very long flights.

Medications/Medical Information

When you're away from home, having easy access to your medications and important health information is vital. This ensures that you can manage your health well and respond quickly in case of an emergency.



Tips

Save the following information in your smartphone and also carry a hard copy that you keep on your person at all times, including your:

- Medical summary and letter from your healthcare provider explaining all of your medical conditions.
- Medication list, including dosages.
- Medical records and recent lab results.
- Healthcare providers' contact information.
- Medical and pharmacy insurance cards.
- Include an ICE (in case of emergency) contact number in your phone.
- If you have a fistula, ask your dialysis team about getting a "no-no" wristband that warns medical staff not to use the fistula to draw blood or to give intravenous medications and not to use that arm to take blood pressure.
- Get a medical alert bracelet with the medical information your healthcare team says should be included.
- Consider laminating important cards, such as those with medical instructions and insurance cards. Include your healthcare facility's contact information. These cards can be shown to airport security and others.



TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel Insurance

Finding the right travel insurance is important for everyone when away from home, but it's an especially good idea for people with CKD. You will want to make sure that your insurance policy covers any medical treatments or emergencies that might occur during your trip, including dialysis and other CKD-related care.



Tips:

- Look for travel insurance policies that specifically cover pre-existing conditions like CKD.
- Understand the extent of coverage, especially for dialysis and emergency services.
- Know how to file a claim and what documents you might need.
- Keep a copy of your travel insurance policy and insurance cards with you during your trip and save a copy to your phone or other mobile device.



Financial Planning

Understanding your legal and financial rights is important for helping to reduce stress while traveling. Managing your finances well can help you handle unexpected situations better, especially regarding medical expenses that might come up during your travels.



Tips:

- **Patient Rights:** Foreign countries usually have different healthcare systems and patient rights. Before traveling, research the healthcare rights in your destination country. This may include understanding how local healthcare systems work for nonresidents and any limitations you may have as a traveler.
- **Medical Expenses:** Plan your travel budget by considering potential medical expenses, including prescription refills, doctor visits, or emergency treatments. It's better to overestimate these costs so that you do not have any unforeseen financial problems while away.
- **Emergency Funds:** Know how to access money quickly if needed. This might involve carrying an emergency credit card, knowing international withdrawal limits on your bank accounts and credit cards, or using financial services that allow fast transfers between accounts.
- **Carry Important Financial Documents:** Keep a digital copy of important financial documents, like your insurance policy, bank contacts, and emergency credit card information, in a secure cloud service or encrypted drive. Also, keep a physical copy in a safe but accessible place in your luggage.
- **Currency Considerations:** If traveling abroad, understand the currency exchange rates and have some local currency on hand for immediate expenses. Consider using financial apps that help track expenses and conversions.

Dialysis and Travel

Planning a trip when you are on dialysis takes a bit of effort, but you should still visit new places and see friends and relatives who do not live close to you. Whether you are on hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or do your dialysis at home, it's important to know how to handle your treatment while traveling. With preparation, you can keep to your dialysis schedule and have a great trip.

Hemodialysis

Organizing hemodialysis treatment while traveling is crucial. Start by researching dialysis centers at your destination. Contact the centers you find to arrange your sessions – and do this well before your trip. Early planning ensures you can enjoy your trip without worrying about your treatment schedule.



Tips:

- Make your dialysis appointments – well in advance of your trip.
- Check that your medical records are sent to and received by the destination dialysis center.
- Make sure you have a backup plan in case something unexpected happens.

Peritoneal Dialysis

Traveling when you're on peritoneal dialysis (PD) offers more flexibility, but it still requires careful planning. Make sure you have enough medical/PD supplies for your entire trip, including some extras. If flying, contact your airline in advance to transport your medical/PD supplies. It's also a good idea to find local healthcare providers at your destination for any urgent needs.



Tips:

- Carefully calculate and organize your medical PD supplies.
- Confirm arrangements for your supplies with the airline.
- Keep a list of doctors and hospitals at your destination.





Home Hemodialysis

For those who do hemodialysis at home, traveling requires additional preparation. Make sure that your hotel or the place you are staying can support your dialysis machine, particularly in terms of power supply and space. If traveling by air, talk to your airline about transporting your machine. Additionally, finding the nearest dialysis center to your destination provides a safety net.



Tips:

- Make sure your hotel or place you're staying has room for your dialysis machine.
- Check with your airline about bringing your dialysis machine.
- Know the locations of dialysis centers close to your travel destination.

International Dialysis Centers

Finding and contacting dialysis centers before you leave is a top priority if you're traveling internationally. Look for dialysis centers near where you will be visiting and keep a list of their contact details.



Tips:

- Keep updated with the policies and availability of dialysis centers at your destination.
- Learn basic healthcare and common CKD-related words in your destination's primary language.

Nutrition and Fluids

Eating well and managing fluid intake is very important when you have CKD – and it's even more important when traveling. Maintaining your usual diet and fluid needs can sometimes be hard when you are traveling. However, with the right information, you can continue making healthy food choices and taking in the right amount of fluids while away from home.

Food

Researching restaurants and menus before you travel can help you identify places that offer kidney-friendly options.



Tips:

- Try to choose foods that your healthcare provider and kidney dietitian recommend.
- Look for restaurants that have healthy choices and ask if they can change certain ingredients if needed.
- Pack some of your favorite snacks for times when you can't find the right kinds of foods.

Fluids

Managing your fluid intake well is very important, but it doesn't have to be difficult. While you're out exploring, keep track of all the drinks you have, including water, tea, coffee, and other beverages. Be aware of hidden fluids in foods, too, like soups or fruits. By staying mindful of your fluid intake and making smart choices, you can focus on enjoying your trip.



Tips:

- Drink the right amount of liquids and try to stick to the limit your healthcare provider has set.
- Have drinks that work with your kidney diet, especially if you need to limit certain minerals, such as potassium and/or phosphorus.
- It's a good idea to carry a water bottle with you, just remember to keep track of how much you drink.



Managing Stress

Traveling with advanced CKD can sometimes make you feel stressed. It's important to find simple ways to stay calm and enjoy your journey. Start by planning activities that you find relaxing and include them on your trip. Remember, you should also leave time for rest and relaxation.



Tips:

- Practice deep breathing or meditation to help manage stress.
- Include activities in your itinerary that you find enjoyable and relaxing.
- Don't forget to take short breaks and rest when needed to help you feel refreshed.



Different Cultures

While traveling to new places usually means having the opportunity to experience and learn about different cultures and customs, in reality, it can also be somewhat scary. New places are certainly exciting, but it's also important to be prepared. Learning about the local customs, especially regarding CKD management, and knowing some key phrases in the local language can be very helpful.

- Before your trip, learn a bit about the local customs and healthcare practices.
- Learn important health-related phrases in the local language.
- Enjoy new experiences but be aware that you have health needs that must be met.
- Add translation apps to your smartphone

Traveling with CKD and Other Common Medical Conditions

Living with CKD can make traveling more complex, especially when you are also managing other health conditions like diabetes and/or heart problems.

Of course, you need to make plans for your CKD treatment while you are away from home, but you also need to make sure any other health issues are well taken care of during your travels. This means understanding how your other conditions interact with CKD and what extra precautions you need to stay healthy on your trip.

Most Common Medical Conditions with CKD

When you have CKD, managing your health while traveling is important, this is especially true if you also have diabetes or heart problems, the two most common serious medical conditions associated with CKD.

DIABETES AND CKD

Having both diabetes and CKD means you need to be extra careful about your blood sugar levels. When you are traveling, your normal routine will likely change, which can affect your blood sugar. That's why checking your levels more often and adjusting your medicine or insulin may be a good idea when you're on a trip.

When planning your meals and snacks, make sure you have healthy foods to help keep blood sugar levels well-balanced. Planning your meals and snacks

carefully is a way to get the right balance of nutrients without overloading your kidneys or affecting your blood sugar.

HEART DISEASE AND CKD

Traveling can be tiring, and if you have heart problems, you should know just how much activity is safe. It's okay to take it slow and to take frequent breaks. Remember to keep your heart medicine close so you can take it as needed.

If you start feeling chest pain, have trouble breathing, or feel very tired in a way that's not normal for you, get medical help right away. You should also know where the nearest hospital or clinic is, just in case.

Tips for People with CKD and Diabetes, and/or Heart Conditions

- Use health apps for tracking blood sugar, food/drink intake, medication schedules, and blood pressure.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet or carry a card identifying your health conditions.
- Keep a supply of emergency medication, as recommended by your healthcare provider, readily available.
- Make sure your travel insurance covers all your medical conditions, including CKD, diabetes, and heart problems.
- Research the healthcare system and facilities at your destination, especially those specializing in kidneys, diabetes, and/or cardiology.



Kidney Transplant/Kidney Transplant Waitlist

Traveling can be a fun part of your life if you have had a kidney transplant or are waiting for one. Again, it just means that planning is important. This includes making sure you take your medicines on time if you've had a transplant and being able to be quickly reached if you're on a transplant waitlist.

Kidney Transplant Recipients

Traveling after receiving a kidney transplant requires careful planning. Your immune system is suppressed to prevent organ rejection, so you must be extra careful about infections and protecting your health.



Tips:

- Make sure you have more than enough anti-rejection medication.
- Keep to your medication schedule and set reminders on your smartphone.
- Be aware of your environment; avoid crowded places and practice good hygiene, such as washing your hands often.
- Another precaution against disease is to wear a face mask and carry hand sanitizer when you are out in public.
- Bring a blood pressure monitor on your trip to keep track of your levels.
- Your healthcare provider may also recommend using creatinine test strips to keep track of your levels while you are away.
- Well before your trip, talk to your transplant team – they may have additional safe travel recommendations.



Kidney Transplant Waitlist

If you are on the kidney transplant waitlist, traveling requires additional considerations, particularly regarding your availability for a transplant.



Tips:

- Make sure you are reachable by phone, text, and/or email at all times.
- Stay within a reasonable distance from your transplant center or a hospital that can handle your transplant.
- Have a plan for quickly returning home if a kidney becomes available.
- Continue your regular CKD management, including dialysis if applicable, and follow your healthcare provider's advice.

Practical Travel Tips

Traveling with CKD involves more than just getting to your destination and back. It's also about making sure every part of your journey is smooth and safe for your health. From what you pack to how you move around and where you stay, each step has tips to make your travel easier.

These practical travel tips are designed to help you manage your CKD while on the go. They include not only standard advice but also additional suggestions you might not have thought of, including ways to use your smartphone to aid your travel.

Packing for your Trip

When packing for your trip, consider everything you'll need to manage your CKD. This means more than just clothes and toiletries; it's about making sure you have all your medical necessities.

- Pack a sufficient supply of all your medications and consider packing some extra in case of delays.
- Make sure you have an appropriate place to store your medication and supplies – for example, they should not be kept in cars due to extremely high or low temperatures.
- Bring a small bag with a travel-sized first aid kit, extra medication, and medical supplies, and keep it with you at all times.
- Use your smartphone to set reminders for medication times and to track your fluid intake.
- Carry a printed copy of your medical information and store a digital copy on your phone or other mobile device for easy access.



If you have a fistula, avoid lifting heavy suitcases with that arm. Ask for help when lifting bags into overhead compartments. This is also important if you have a PD catheter.

Airports and Public Transport

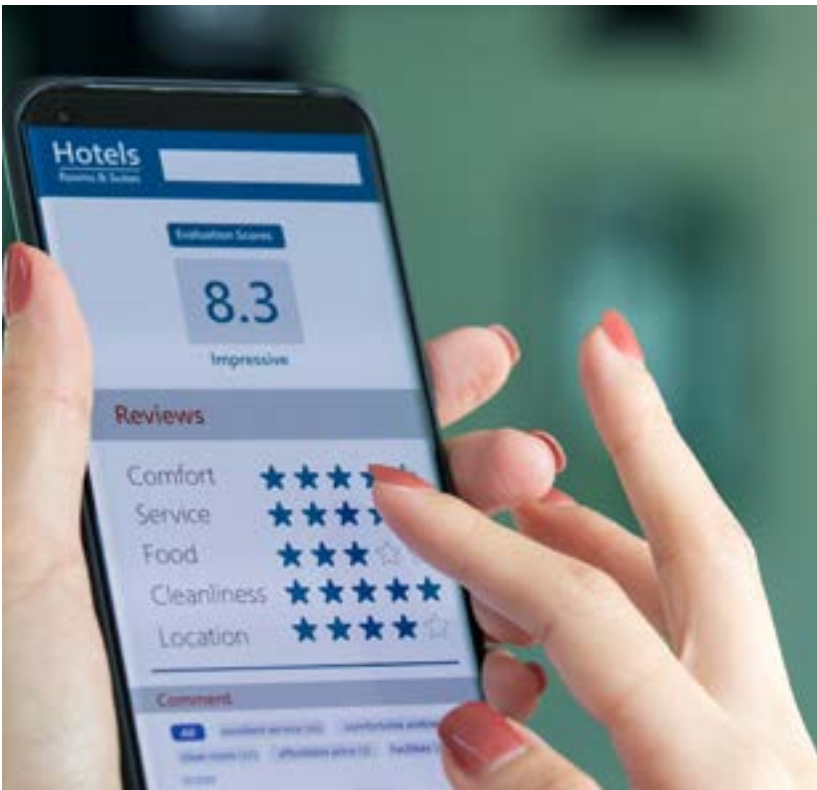
Airports and public transport can be challenging, but there are ways to make it easier, including these ideas:

- Plan for extra time so you're not rushed, which can help reduce stress.
- If you need assistance at the airport or on public transport, don't hesitate to ask for it in advance.
- Use apps on your smartphone to track your travel schedules and look at maps of airports or bus/train stations.
- Stay well-hydrated but remember to balance your fluid intake with the recommendations from your healthcare provider.

Lodging

Choosing the right place to stay can make a big difference in your CKD management while traveling.

- Look for lodging close to medical facilities or dialysis centers if needed.
- Make sure your room has a refrigerator to store medications or dietary items.
- Consider staying in a place with kitchen facilities so you can prepare your own meals.
- Use hotel or travel review apps to find hotels, motels, short-term rentals, and hostels that meet your health and financial needs.



Preparing for Emergencies

Traveling with CKD means being ready for unexpected situations, especially medical emergencies. Whether you're in another country or just in a different city, knowing how to respond to a health issue quickly and effectively can make a big difference.

This part of your planning concerns being proactive and having the right information at your fingertips. It covers handling medical emergencies and keeping important contact information close by.

Handling Medical Emergencies Abroad

A medical emergency in a foreign country can be scary, but being prepared can help you navigate the situation more easily.

- Learn key health-related phrases in the local language, like “I need a doctor” or “emergency.”
- Keep a list of emergency numbers for the country you're visiting, as well as the address and contact info of the nearest embassy or consulate.
- Use your smartphone to store health information and emergency contacts, and download apps that can help in emergencies, like location-based hospital finders.
- Always carry a card or a digital note on your phone or other mobile device that explains your CKD condition, medications, and any allergies in the local language.

Important Contacts and Resources

Having a list of contacts and resources can be a lifesaver during your travels.

- Compile a list of contacts, including your doctor, dialysis center, and a trusted person back home.
- Store these contacts in your phone and keep a copy in your travel bag.
- Download apps that provide travel health advice and access to medical professionals or that can connect you to local healthcare services.
- Keep the contact information for your travel insurance provider handy and know the steps and documents needed to process a claim.

Being prepared for emergencies is a key part of traveling safely with CKD. With the right preparation, you can handle unexpected situations more confidently and make sure your health is always a priority

Traveling with CKD

Traveling when you have CKD means you have to plan a little more, but it doesn't mean you can't have great trips. You can go to amazing places and have fun. It's all about making the right preparations to care for your health and enjoy your time away. With good planning, you can see new things, make happy memories, and have fun traveling.

Travel Preparation Checklist

MEDICAL CONSULTATION:

- Pre-Travel Checkup:** Schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider.
- Treatment Plan:** Discuss adjustments to your treatment while traveling.
- Medical Documentation:** Get a medical summary and a letter detailing your treatment requirements and save to your smartphone.
- Vaccines:** Make sure you are up to date with all vaccines recommended by your healthcare provider.
- Register for Smartphone Access:** Your healthcare provider likely provides patient support and medical record access through an electronic health record system such as MyChart by Epic – sign up so you can access your medical information whenever needed.

TELEHEALTH OPTIONS:

- Pre-travel Arrangements:** Check with your healthcare provider about telehealth options.
- App Setup:** Ensure you have the necessary apps or tools installed on your mobile devices.
- Internet Access:** Make sure you have reliable internet access for virtual consultations.

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT:

- Organize Medications:** Pack all medications in your carry-on luggage.
- Extra Supplies:** Bring additional medication for unexpected delays.
- Medication Reminders:** Use your phone to set medication times.
- Digital Health Apps:** Use apps to keep track of your medical history and virtual consultations.

DIALYSIS PLANNING (if applicable):

- Treatment Coordination:** Arrange treatments at your destination.
- Home Dialysis Prep:** Ensure suitable lodging to accommodate your equipment.
- Local Centers:** Keep a list of dialysis centers near your travel destination.
- GPS Navigation:** Use your smartphone to locate nearby healthcare facilities.

KIDNEY TRANSPLANT WAITLIST:

- Stay Reachable:** Make sure you can be reached by phone, text, and/or email.
- Location Planning:** Only travel a reasonable distance from your transplant center.
- Emergency Travel Plan:** Prepare for a quick return home if a kidney becomes available.
- CKD Management:** Continue regular CKD treatments, including dialysis.

KIDNEY TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT:

- Transplant Team Consultation:** Discuss your travel plans with your transplant team for individual advice.
- Medication Management:** Bring enough anti-rejection medications for the full length of time you plan to be away from home, plus extras.
- Medication Schedule Reminders:** Use smartphone app reminders so you take your medications on time.
- Health Monitoring:** Bring necessary medical supplies like blood pressure monitors and creatinine test strips.
- Infection Prevention:** Practice good hygiene and consider carrying hand sanitizer and using face masks.

DIET AND FLUID MANAGEMENT:

- Meal Planning:** Carry kidney-friendly snacks.
- Hydration:** Keep your fluid intake within restrictions.
- Fluid Tracking:** Use a water bottle to measure how much you are drinking.
- Online Food Trackers:** Use apps to track dietary intake.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:

- Emergency Contacts:** Include your healthcare provider and dialysis center.
- Medical Information:** Carry details about your CKD and treatment.
- Local Healthcare:** Know nearby hospitals or clinics.
- Emergency Alert Apps:** Download apps that send your location to emergency services.

TRAVEL INSURANCE:

- Appropriate Coverage:** Make sure your policy covers CKD-related issues.
- Policy Understanding:** Be familiar with your dialysis and emergency coverage.
- Policy Accessibility:** Keep a copy of your insurance policy handy.

ACCOMMODATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- Location:** Choose lodging close to medical facilities.
- Medication Storage:** Look for lodgings that have refrigerators if needed.
- Meal Prep:** Seek out lodgings with kitchen facilities.

PACKING ESSENTIALS:

- First Aid Kit:** Include a travel-sized kit.
- Special Hygiene Products:** Pack any CKD-specific care items.
- Comfortable Clothing:** Choose appropriate attire for your activities.
- Portable Medical Devices:** Bring any necessary devices to sync with your phone.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

- Passport and Visas:** Make sure they are up to date.
- Document Copies:** Keep backups of your ID and medical info.
- Document Security:** Plan for safekeeping while traveling.
- Digital Copies:** Store digital versions of important documents in a secure cloud service.

COMMUNICATION PREPARATION:

- Local Language:** Learn healthcare-related phrases.
- Addresses and Directions:** Save them in your phone.
- Phone Connectivity:** Check roaming plans or local SIM options.
- Virtual Pharmacy Services:** Familiarize with options for medication refills.

We are Here to Help

There are two ways to learn about the many free resources available to you:

Call the National Kidney Foundation Cares Patient Help Line toll-free at **855.NKF.CARES** (855.653.2273) or email **nkfcares@kidney.org**

Learn more at **[kidney.org](https://www.kidney.org)**

NKF PEERS

Connect with a trained peer mentor who can share their experiences about dialysis, transplant, or living kidney donation with you.

Call **855.NKF.PEER** (855.653.7337) or go online **[kidney.org/patients/peers](https://www.kidney.org/patients/peers)**

Setting a Standard for Care

The National Kidney Foundation, through its *Kidney Disease Outcomes Quality Initiative* (KDOQI®), defines stages of kidney disease and offers guidelines that help your doctor and healthcare team make important decisions about your medical treatment.

The information in this booklet is based on those recommended guidelines.



The information contained in this publication is based on current data and expert guidance available at the time of publication. The information is intended to help patients become aware of their disease and its management. This publication is not intended to set out a preferred standard of care and should not be construed as one. Neither should the information be interpreted as prescribing an exclusive course of management. Patients should always consult with their healthcare providers regarding decisions about their individual plan of care.



NATIONAL KIDNEY FOUNDATION®

The National Kidney Foundation is revolutionizing the fight to save lives by eliminating preventable kidney disease, accelerating innovation for the dignity of the patient experience, and dismantling structural inequities in kidney care, dialysis, and transplantation.

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