

Travelling after a transplant



You have an opportunity to travel? Travelling after a transplant is often possible. You just need to plan your departure carefully with your care team. This fact sheet answers the most frequently asked questions on this topic.

Am I ready to travel?

You need to discuss this with your transplant team. Usually, it's recommended that you wait about a year after the transplant before travelling or planning a stay far from home. During the first year, medical appointments are more frequent and the risk of complications (rejection, infections, etc.) is higher.

At the time of departure, your state of health and your medication must be stable. The goal is to make sure everything goes well during your trip!

How long before departure should I plan my trip?

Generally, it's advisable to plan it **at least 2 months** in advance. This allows time to:

- have your transplant team assess your health status
- find a suitable destination
- get vaccinations, if required
- get health insurance that meets your needs
- arrange for medical supplies and health information to take with you (see below)

Can I go to any country?

The choice of destination can have important consequences for your health. Travel in Ontario, the Caribbean, or Asia doesn't present the same risks!

You need to ask yourself:

- What is the risk of an epidemic in that country?
- Could the tap water and food make me sick?
- Is there a regular air transport service?
- Will I have access to specialized health services if I need them?
- How long will the trip take?

The staff at a travel health clinic can help you find answers to these questions. See also the Useful Resources section at the end of this fact sheet.



Make sure you're covered!

It's important to have travel insurance. Medical expenses abroad can be very high.

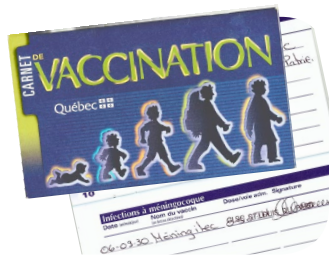
- Does your insurance company have special rules for transplant patients? For example, many companies require that medication be stable for at least 4 to 12 months before leaving.
- Does your insurance cover hospitalization abroad and repatriation to Canada in case of emergency?
- Are you insured in the event of cancellation or interruption of your trip?

I've chosen my destination. Where can I find out if vaccinations are required?

Call a travel health clinic. The staff will give you an appointment. Call at least 2 months before your departure, as some vaccines require booster shots. More than one visit to the clinic may be needed.

Tell the clinic staff that you've had an organ transplant. Your immune system is weaker, so some vaccines can't be given to you.

If they suggest medication for you, such as for malaria or diarrhea, check with your transplant team to make sure there are no contraindications in your case.



The travel health clinic will also advise you on:

- how to prevent infections (from water, food, insect bites, etc.) in the country you will be visiting
- what to put into your first aid kit
- who to call in an emergency



GOOD TO KNOW

To prepare yourself, read the document *General Advice for All Destinations* available from the CHUM's travel health clinic (see the Useful Resources section).

What information about my health should I bring with me when travelling?

It's very important to have with you:

> **A recent list of all the medications you're taking**, obtained from your pharmacist. Customs may check these. Note that medications must be transported in their original containers.



> **Your doctor's prescription for insulin syringes**, if you use them. At Customs, you will be able to explain their presence in your luggage.

> **A letter from your transplant team with:**

- contact information for the transplant team
- a brief description of your health condition
- your needs in terms of medications and medical supplies (such as needles, syringes, masks)

In the event of an accident, emergency, or complication, this letter will enable the medical team in the country where you are to treat you as well as possible.

How much medication should I bring?

Bring double the amount of anti-rejection and other medications you need for the duration of the trip. For example, if you're going away for a week, take enough for 2 weeks.

If you're in a different time zone, you may have to change the times you take your medication. Your transplant team will give you all the information you need on this.

I'll be travelling by air. Where should I store my medications?

Pack them in your carry-on luggage, not your checked luggage. This is to avoid the impact that pressure fluctuations can have on medication in the luggage compartment. Also, some airlines prohibit medication in checked luggage.



Regardless of the type of transplant you received, wash your hands often and keep your hands away from your face as much as possible. The eyes, nose, and mouth are excellent entry points for germs! Carry a small bottle of alcohol-based (hydroalcoholic) antiseptic solution in your hand luggage.



If you receive health care while travelling

Ask for a copy of the diagnosis and test results. This information will be useful to your transplant team when you return.

While travelling, should I wear a mask?

Respiratory infections are common when travelling, whether at the airport, or on planes, trains, or buses. **If you've had a lung transplant**, wear a surgical mask, as you are more susceptible to them. Change it as soon as it becomes wet.

When I return from my trip, will there be any special follow-up?

No, you'll resume your usual follow-up visits. But if you have any symptoms upon your return, such as diarrhea, fever, or vomiting, see a doctor right away.





USEFUL RESOURCES

CHUM Travel Health Clinic
1029 Saint-Denis St., 4th Floor, Montréal
> **514 890-8332**

> fondationduchum.com/clinique/
In the Clinic section, you'll find practical information on vaccination. In the same section, scroll down to the Consultation section. Look at the safety tips for before departure, while travelling, and on your return. Also read the pamphlet *General Advice for All Destinations*.

Your neighbourhood travel health clinic:
Your local CLSC can help you in your information searches. You can also consult the list of clinics on the Public Health Agency of Canada website:

> travel.gc.ca
Click on Travel abroad → Travel health and safety → Find a travel health clinic.

Travelling with medication:
To see the Government of Canada's guidelines.

> travel.gc.ca
Click on Travel abroad → Travel health and safety → Travelling with medication.

Canadian embassies abroad:
Contact details of the embassy or consulate in the country you will be travelling to. They can provide you with assistance in case of an emergency, such as directing you to the nearest health services.

> travel.gc.ca
Click on Assistance abroad → Embassies and consulates.

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site
chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante



NOTEPAD



Questions



Resource people and contacts

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca

