

Travel Tips for caregivers

by Josie Padro



Fall is the time that many of us take off on a holiday. It's a good time to avoid crowds, cash in on shoulder-season prices and, in many places, still enjoy warm weather. If you are traveling with a friend or family member who needs care, you may need to take a few extra factors into consideration for both yourself and the person you're travelling with.

Stow prescription meds in your carry-on

Resist the temptation to repack medications into more space-efficient containers. The Government of Canada website travel.gc.ca advises travellers to carry medications in the containers they were dispensed in, since information on the label can be helpful when you're clearing security. Also recommended is packing a copy of the prescriptions for all medications and for glasses in case they need to be replaced while you're away.

Speak to the airline

Along with medications, you may also need to bring medical equipment such as a glucose monitor, syringes or portable oxygen. A complete list of items allowed on board is available on the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority website, www.catsa.gc.ca.

Always contact the airline in advance so they are aware of what you will be bringing. You can also request assistance to board the plane or transportation to a connecting flight.

Purchase travel health insurance

When you purchase travel insurance it's extremely important to answer the medical questionnaire accurately. In several recent cases travellers were left with massive medical bills after failing to disclose seemingly insignificant health information. You might want to ask your physician to review the forms to confirm that you've included everything.

Reduce jet lag

Get a jump on the time change several days before you go. This is called "advancing your body clock." For example, if you're travelling east, get up and go to bed an hour or two earlier each day.

Once you've cleared security, pick up some fruit and water at the airport. Staying well-hydrated and eating healthy foods will stave off the heavy, dull feeling that can accompany jet lag.

Cultivate comfort

To reduce exhaustion, you may want to break up long-distance flights. Waiting for connecting flights can not only add hours to your journey, but can also contribute to fatigue. Rather than camping out at the airport, book a room at a nearby hotel and take your connecting flight the following day. Of course, this will add cost to your trip, but it may pay off if you feel well rested when you arrive.

If possible, use frequent flyer or credit card points for an upgrade to business or first class. This ensures a roomier, more comfortable spot on the plane and comes with access to airport lounges where you can wait for your flight in comfort.

Pack a few items that will help you and your family member settle in and get comfortable: a small inflatable pillow for back support, a light shawl that can double as a blanket, pre-moistened towelettes to freshen up, eye drops and lip balm to help reduce the drying effects of cabin air.