

As the winter travel season approaches, the American Pharmacists Association encourages consumers to talk with their pharmacist about their medications before they pack their bags. This will help ensure each person knows the best way to pack their medications, what to do if the medication is lost and anything to be aware of with travel and the medication. The short conversation could save each person a lot of holiday trouble further down the road if they do not prepare correctly.

Americans are known to travel a lot during the holiday and winter season. According to the Bureau of Transportation and Statistics, the number of long distance trips—more than 50 miles—just during the six-day Thanksgiving travel period, increases by 54 percent. Travel disrupts health care routines and the normal things consumers do to take care of themselves—such as adhering to a medication regimen—can sometimes fall from the top list of priorities.

Here are some tips to help maintain a healthy medication regime throughout the travel season:

- Organize a health kit that contains all prescription and over-the-counter medications, herbal supplements, vitamins and minerals. Store medications correctly and pack ample medication and equipment. Some medications have special storage instructions or require specific dosing equipment. If flying to a destination or crossing borders, always carry your medications in the original bottles in carry-on luggage.
 - Bring more medication than expected to use. Talk to the pharmacist about the possibility of obtaining a medication “vacation supply” from the insurance company, he/she may be able to help. Being prepared for unexpected extended travel helps ensure safe and effective medication use. It is also good to know the insurance company’s policy on medication transfers and replacement supplies if your medication is lost.
 - Pack a “Preventative Medicine” Kit. Talk with the pharmacist about any over-the-counter medications that should be packed for the area of the world you are traveling to or what you are planning to do. Basics include: anti-diarrhea, anti-nausea, antihistamine, anti-motion sickness, mild laxative or stool softener, medicine for pain or fever and antibacterial/antifungal cream/ointment.
 - Get up-to-date needed. Make sure to get your annual flu shot. If traveling overseas, make sure to meet all of the travel vaccine recommendations put out by the CDC.
 - Beware of “Drugged Driving.” Certain medications can impair perception, judgment and reaction times causing a hazardous driving situation. Talk with the pharmacist about side effects the medication may cause and whether to adjust the dosing schedule to avoid times operating a vehicle.
 - Carry an updated personal medication and vaccination record. This is a list of prescription, over-the-counter and herbal medications, how to take them, and why. This list should also contain an up-to-date history of vaccinations.
- If unexpectedly admitted into a hospital, or must see a health care provider while traveling, the list can help them understand current treatments. To download a personal medication list www.pharmacist.com/pmr.
- Have a plan for adjusting medication regimen. Travel may require to adjust the medication regimen, or when to take medication, for time and routine changes. If traveling across the country and would normally take a medication twice a day, for example, adjust that schedule to take medications approximately twelve hours apart—which may be earlier or later than the first

bedtime or morning on another coast. Ask the pharmacist about how to alter the schedule to fit health-care needs.

- Be careful or avoid drinking alcohol, especially when flying or visiting cities in higher altitudes. Alcohol can interact with many prescription and over-the-counter medicines.

- Ask the pharmacist if there are any foods or beverages that conflict with your medicines. Travellers may be more inclined to eat unfamiliar foods when traveling to new cities or foreign countries.

- Practice good hygiene, get rest and eat well. Frequent hand-washing/cleansing, use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer and coughing /sneezing into a sleeve or a tissue will provide protection

- In addition, try not to overdo it and get run down, eat right and drink plenty of water (and depending upon the location use bottled water) are good practices that can reduce the risk of getting sick.