

QUICK LINKS**Packing Personal Medications—TRAVELER INFORMATION**

- [Pre-Travel Planning](#)
- [Carrying Medications through Customs](#)
- [Acquiring Replacement Medications Abroad](#)

Traveler Information

PACKING PERSONAL MEDICATIONS**PRE-TRAVEL PLANNING**

Before departure, persons who need to carry medication while traveling should consider how best to avoid having their medication confiscated at customs and what to do should they run out of or lose their medication. In addition, travelers should:

- Carry medical alert information, preferably a medical alert wristband or tags listing any medical conditions (e.g., diabetes) and/or allergies.
- Research drug importation restrictions for their destination(s).
- Carry slightly more medication than is needed for the trip, but not an excessive amount.

CARRYING MEDICATIONS THROUGH CUSTOMS

Although medications in amounts clearly related to personal use for the expected duration of the trip (up to 30 days) are rarely inspected or questioned, customs officials can be suspicious of medications. Bringing even personal medication supplies is considered importation of drugs. Reduce the likelihood of difficulty by following these recommendations:

- Keep medications in their original, labeled, pharmacy packaging when possible. The pharmacy can reprint a label if necessary.
- Keep medications in carry-on luggage instead of checked luggage in case checked luggage is lost or delayed or customs requires an explanation or documentation of need.
- Avoid using “pill boxes” in transit. While they are helpful to remember to take medications, it makes it difficult for customs to determine what they are. Pill boxes should be packed empty and then filled at the destination.
- For certain medications, such as controlled substances and HIV medications, it may be prudent to obtain and carry a letter from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationery, appropriately signed and dated, stating medical necessity.
- If intending to travel with a controlled drug for personal use, it is most prudent to review medication regulations on the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) website as well as official government sites. Addresses as well as excerpted national statutes for most countries can be found at www.incb.org/incb/en/psychotropic-substances/travellers_country_regulations.html. Rules on amphetamine-based medications used for attention deficit disorders should always be checked before travel. Embassies are generally poor sources of information but may be the only option.
- Those using injectable medications, such as insulin or heparin, should obtain and carry at all times a physician-signed letter explaining the need to carry needles and syringes. Carry only the necessary number of syringes for the trip.
- Review the individual country information to learn if there are known, consistently enforced medication entry restrictions. This may apply to over-the-counter medication as well as prescribed medications.
- Medical personnel supporting expeditions, aid missions, or other teams should ascertain pertinent import and customs duty regulations ahead of time by contacting the relevant foreign embassy.
- Supplies of medications that are beyond the amount needed for personal use of the traveler going through customs will almost always lead to delay or detention on arrival. In addition, travelers who have forgotten some medication at home cannot have a later-arriving family member or friend bring in the medication (the traveler and prescription label name must match).

ACQUIRING REPLACEMENT MEDICATIONS ABROAD

Keep a list all medications and their generic names in case it is necessary to replace any of the medications. Ask the pharmacist to create a Personal Medication Record, which lists the drug, regimen, and purpose. The following are some best practices for acquiring replacement medications:

- Do not have someone mail (including express couriers) medications to the traveler. In the United States, it is not legal for a non-registered distributor (e.g., an individual) to mail prescription drugs anywhere. In addition, other countries may have restrictions on unregistered drugs (i.e., medications not approved for use in that country) coming into their country by mail.

- It may be prudent for those on critical medications for which an uninterrupted supply is essential to determine pre-travel the availability of that medication or an equivalent, destination-specific medication. The pharmacist may be able to assist in this determination as well providing printouts.
- Obtain an extra written prescription for critical medications to show to a physician or pharmacy at the destination.
- Be aware that counterfeit medications is a growing global problem.
 - Determine within a given country the best option for obtaining a pure drug, such as a hospital pharmacy versus a stand-alone pharmacy.
 - Call a pharmacist at home to help verify authenticity of medications purchased abroad (such as color, shape, and side imprints).

Travax content represents decision-relevant, expert synthesis of real-time data reconciled with new and existing available advice from authoritative national and international bodies. Recommendations may differ from those of individual countries' public health authorities.

© Shoreland, Inc. All rights reserved.