

# Travel and cancer



In partnership with



ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS AND  
SURGEONS OF GLASGOW  
TRAVEL MEDICINE

# About this booklet

This booklet is about travelling if you are affected by cancer. It is for anyone planning a trip or holiday in the UK or abroad.

The booklet explains how cancer and its treatment may affect your trip. It also gives information about:

- planning ahead
- travel insurance
- taking medicines abroad
- looking after yourself while you are away.

We hope it helps you deal with some of the questions or feelings you may have. We cannot give advice about the best treatment for you. This booklet does not have information about going abroad for cancer treatment. You should talk to your doctor, who knows your medical history.

## About the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow

Members of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow's Faculty of Travel Medicine are experts on travel health. They support travel health professionals with education and training. They aim to set high standards for travel medicine healthcare that helps ensure the safety of patients and travellers.

You can find more information on [rcpsg.ac.uk](http://rcpsg.ac.uk)

# How to use this booklet

This booklet is split into sections to help you find what you need. You do not have to read it from start to finish. You can use the [contents list](#) to help you.

It is fine to skip parts of the booklet. You can always come back to them when you feel ready.

At the [end of the booklet](#), there are details of other organisations that can help.

## Quotes

In this booklet, we have included quotes from people who have travelled after a cancer diagnosis, which you may find helpful. These are from people who have chosen to share their story with us. To share your experience, visit [macmillan.org.uk/shareyourstory](https://macmillan.org.uk/shareyourstory)

## For more information

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000), 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://macmillan.org.uk)

If you would prefer to speak to us in another language, interpreters are available. Please tell us, in English, the language you want to use.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call us using NGT (Text Relay) on [18001 0808 808 00 00](tel:1800108088080000), or use the NGT Lite app.

We have some information in different languages and formats, including audio, eBooks, easy read, Braille, large print and translations. To order these, visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000).

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## Contents

How cancer can affect travel **5**

Planning your trip **21**

Travel insurance **45**

Travelling with medicines **65**

Taking care while you are away **77**

Travelling with long-term treatment effects **97**

Further information **113**



# How cancer can affect travel

The benefits of travel	6
How cancer and treatment can affect travel	7
Side effects and travel	9
Cancer and air travel	17
Vaccinations	19

# The benefits of travel

Travel can have many benefits if you are affected by cancer. It may:

- help you feel more relaxed and positive
- allow you to spend time with people who are important to you
- help you become more active, which can improve your health
- give you time to think about your situation and what you have been through.

A holiday is a chance to rest your body and mind. But there are also other reasons you may need or want to travel. For example, you may want to travel for spiritual or religious reasons, for work, or to visit family or friends.

You can talk to other people affected by cancer about travelling, read blogs about travel or write your own travel blog on our Online Community – visit [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://macmillan.org.uk/community)

# How cancer and treatment can affect travel

Many people who have cancer can travel without problems. For others, cancer or its treatment may make travelling more difficult. How cancer affects your travels depends on different things. These include the type of cancer you have and how it is treated.

Here are some things you may need to think about:

- Cancer and its treatment can cause symptoms or [side effects](#). These can make it more difficult to travel or cause problems while you are away.
- You may need to [take medicines or medical equipment with you](#).
- [Travel insurance](#) is usually more expensive for people living with cancer.
- If you want to fly, you may need a [fit-to-fly certificate](#) from your doctor to meet an airline's requirements.

Planning ahead can help you avoid problems. It is important to [speak to your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or a travel health professional](#) before you make any plans or book any travel. They can tell you whether travelling may be unsafe or explain how to prepare and what precautions to take.

If you are still having treatment, your healthcare team may be able to help you plan a safer trip. For example, it may be possible to change your treatment dates or arrange a break in your treatment.



**“ I did not want to miss out on any opportunity to experience travel. But I had to juggle my time with hospital appointments and work. ”**

Jolene, diagnosed with melanoma

# Side effects and travel

Cancer symptoms or the side effects of treatment may affect your travel. Knowing how to manage these can help make your trip safer and more enjoyable.

## Infection risk

Some cancer treatments can affect your immune system and increase your risk of infection. These include cancer drug treatments such as chemotherapy, and some types of targeted therapy or immunotherapy.

If you want to travel while having treatment, talk to your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or a travel health professional. They will advise you if and when it is safe to travel.

Your risk of serious problems from an infection may be higher at certain times. For example, you may have a higher risk:

- during treatment
- for a few weeks after finishing treatment
- for up to a year after high-dose chemotherapy for a stem cell or a bone marrow transplant.

Your risk of infection also depends on where you plan to travel. If you want to travel abroad, ask your cancer doctor for advice about your risk of malaria and other diseases that may be common in that area. You may be able to [have vaccinations](#) to help protect you from some types of infections in other parts of the world.

If you are travelling while you are still at a higher risk of getting an infection, your doctor may give you antibiotics to take with you.

Always follow the advice you have been given to reduce your risk of an infection. The following things can help reduce your risk:

- Wash your hands regularly, especially before eating.
- Follow food and water hygiene advice and be careful about what foods you eat.
- Try to prevent insect bites, especially if you have or are at [risk of lymphoedema](#) – this is swelling of a part of the body.
- Take anti-malarial tablets, if you are travelling to a country where malaria is common – [malaria is a disease caused by mosquitoes](#).
- Always contact a doctor straight away if you think you may have an infection – for example, if you have flu-like symptoms or a high temperature.

## **Fatigue (tiredness)**

Fatigue is a feeling of tiredness or exhaustion. It is a common side effect of cancer treatment.

Fatigue can sometimes continue for months after treatment finishes. For some people, it may be an ongoing symptom of the cancer.

Fatigue does not have to stop you travelling. But it is important to think about how much activity you can manage and how to pace yourself. Try to plan when you will rest between activities.

You can usually arrange help at airports, train stations and on ships. For example, you could arrange to have a wheelchair, so you do not need to walk as much.

If you are flying across different time zones, your normal sleep pattern may be affected. This is called jet lag. It can make you feel even more tired. There is no treatment for jet lag. It should improve in a few days as your body adjusts.

For information and tips about managing jet lag, visit [nhs.uk/conditions/jet-lag](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/jet-lag)

We have more information in our booklet [Coping with fatigue \(tiredness\)](#). Or visit [macmillan.org.uk/fatigue](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/fatigue)

## Being more sensitive to the sun

Radiotherapy, chemotherapy and many other cancer drugs can make your skin and eyes more sensitive to the sun.

It is important to know how to protect yourself in the sun. We have more information about [taking care in the sun](#).

**“ I gave myself a goal – I wanted to travel around the world. So I began planning the trip and building myself up to being able to do it. It kept me focused and gave me something to look forward to. ”**

Eileen, diagnosed with breast cancer

## Long-term effects of treatment

Some cancer treatments can cause long-term effects. These are side effects that do not go away after a few months, or that start months or years after treatment finishes.

We have more information about travelling with long-term side effects and how to manage if you have:

- [lymphoedema](#) – this is swelling of a part of the body
- changes to how your bowel or bladder works
- a stoma
- surgery to remove the spleen
- a [tracheostomy or laryngectomy](#) – this is surgery to remove part, or all, of the voice box.



## After surgery

If you have recently had surgery, your doctor will advise you whether it is safe to travel, or how long you should wait before travelling. They can also tell you if there is a type of travel you should avoid.

Remember to tell your travel insurance provider that you have had surgery. Ask them whether this affects your insurance cover.

After some operations, you are advised not to fly for a while. It is important to follow your doctor's advice.

If you have recently had surgery, you are more at risk of a blood clot. You may have to delay your travel for a few weeks and follow advice to reduce this risk.

If you have had a breast removed (mastectomy), you may be concerned about what to wear on holiday. Organisations such as [Breast Cancer Now](#) have information about suitable holiday wear, such as post-surgery swimsuits.

## Blood clot risk

Cancer and some treatments increase your risk of developing a blood clot. This is called a deep vein thrombosis (DVT).

Treatments that can increase the risk of developing a blood clot include:

- recent surgery
- chemotherapy drugs
- radiotherapy
- some hormonal therapy drugs, such as tamoxifen, medroxyprogesterone acetate, megestrol acetate or diethylstilbestrol (Stilboestrol®)
- some targeted therapy or immunotherapy drugs.

Travelling, especially flying, also increases the risk of developing a blood clot. You are particularly at risk if you sit still for long periods of time. This could happen when you are on a long-distance flight, or on long bus, train or car journeys.

## Preventing blood clots

Before you travel, ask your cancer doctor or specialist nurse about your risk of a blood clot. You may also be more at risk if you have a personal or family history of blood clots.

Your doctor or nurse can tell you about anything you should do to help prevent blood clots. Sometimes they may recommend medication to help reduce your risk while travelling – for example, they may give you advice about taking aspirin before a long flight.

Ask them if you should wear compression stockings for travel. These are below-the-knee stockings that keep gentle pressure on your legs and help blood flow. They are important if you are going on a flight of 4 hours or more.

Make sure your compression stockings are properly measured and fitted for you. You can ask your nurse or a pharmacist for advice.

Here are some other tips:

- Book an aisle seat, especially on flights, to make it easier to move around.
- Wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothing, especially around the waist and groin.
- When sitting, exercise your legs, feet and toes about every 30 minutes.
- Walk around when you can – try to walk up and down the aisles for a few minutes every hour.
- Try some upper body and breathing exercises – these also help improve your circulation.
- Avoid taking sleeping pills.
- Drink plenty of water, especially during flights.
- Avoid drinking too much alcohol or caffeine – these can dehydrate you.



## **Possible symptoms of a blood clot**

Symptoms of a blood clot include:

- throbbing pain in a leg or an arm, with swelling and red, darkened or warm skin around the painful area
- suddenly feeling breathless or coughing
- sharp chest pain, which may be worse when you cough or take a deep breath.

Always get urgent medical help if you have any of these symptoms. A blood clot is very serious, but it can be treated with drugs that thin the blood.

You can find more information about blood clots on the NHS website. Visit [nhs.uk/conditions/deep-vein-thrombosis-dvt](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/deep-vein-thrombosis-dvt)

# Cancer and air travel

Some people with cancer may be advised not to fly. This is usually because oxygen levels and air pressure change when flying. You may be advised not to fly if you:

- are breathless
- have a low number of red blood cells – this is called anaemia
- have a low number of platelets – these are cells that help the blood to clot
- are at risk of increased pressure or swelling in the brain because of a brain tumour
- have recently had surgery to the brain, chest, bowel or eye
- have problems with your ears or sinuses.

Always get advice from your cancer doctor or specialist nurse if you are thinking of flying anywhere. They can advise whether this is safe for you. The Civil Aviation Authority also has information about fitness to fly. Visit [caa.co.uk/passengers/before-you-fly/am-i-fit-to-fly/health-information-for-passengers](https://www.caa.co.uk/passengers/before-you-fly/am-i-fit-to-fly/health-information-for-passengers)

Airlines may have their own rules about flying after surgery or with a medical condition. They may ask you for a fit-to-fly certificate from your doctor.

**“ I found it really scary at first. We went on holiday to Torquay as a family. Then we found out I could fly, so my husband and I went to Alicante for a few days. ”**

Sandra, diagnosed with cancer of the bowel, liver, lungs and lymph nodes

# Vaccinations

Vaccinations can reduce your chance of getting certain infections. You may need vaccinations before you travel to some parts of the world.

If you have had a particular cancer or treatment, you may not be able to have some of the vaccinations recommended for your trip. This may affect where you can travel.

If you have or are at risk of lymphoedema, avoid having injections in the affected arm. It is important to get advice about vaccinations from your cancer doctor, specialist nurse, GP, practice nurse or a travel health professional.

We have more information about [talking to a health professional](#) and [getting vaccinations](#).

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# Planning your trip

Talking to a health professional	22
Getting vaccinations	25
Coronavirus (covid) outbreaks and travel	30
Planning ahead	32
Telling travel companies about your needs	33
Air travel	36
Parking and driving	40
Rail travel	41
Sea travel	43

# Talking to a health professional

Before you travel, it is worth getting advice from a health professional about:

- whether it is safe for you to travel
- suitable destinations
- any issues because of the type of cancer you have, your treatment or side effects
- [vaccinations](#) to protect you from infections in some parts of the world
- arranging medical supplies – for example, if you use [oxygen](#)
- [taking medicines abroad](#)
- what to do [if you have any problems while you are away](#).

There are several ways to get travel health advice. You may have questions you want to ask your cancer doctor or specialist nurse. Or you may talk to a GP, practice nurse or travel health professional about your plans.

Some GPs and practice nurses do not offer travel health advice, so ask your practice whether this is available. They can give you advice about other clinics or pharmacies in your area that can help.

The [Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow \(RCPSG\)](#) has information about getting advice if you are planning a trip abroad. It explains what care you should expect from a travel health adviser.

## Asking for a doctor's letter

It is helpful to take information about your health with you when you are travelling. You can show this to healthcare providers if you become unwell while you are away. You may find it helpful to take photocopies of any important documents or scan them onto your phone or laptop.

You can ask your GP or cancer doctor for a letter that explains your diagnosis and treatment. Or if you get copies of your hospital letters, you could take those. They often contain a summary of your diagnosis and treatment.

You should also ask your GP or cancer doctor if you need any of the following:

- a doctor's letter confirming you are fit to travel for travel insurance
- a fit-to-fly certificate
- a doctor's letter explaining if you need to take certain types of medicines abroad.

Your GP may charge a fee for some types of letters and certificates. They should tell you what the fee is before they do the work.

If you are travelling abroad, you can look up translations of key phrases about your health and treatment. For example, you may want to know the name of the cancer or a type of treatment.

It is not always easy to be certain that the translation of medical terms is correct. You can try using a foreign language dictionary, a translation app or the free online translation service at [translate.google.com](https://translate.google.com)



**“ I was scared to go on any holiday because I would be away from my hospital and doctor. But now I have visited Ireland, Spain and France. And I have had many weekends away in the UK. ”**

Grant, diagnosed with multiple myeloma

# Getting vaccinations

Vaccinations reduce your risk of getting certain infections. For information about travel vaccinations and the risk of infectious disease in other countries, visit:

- [travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries) if you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland
- [fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations](https://fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations) if you live in Scotland.

## Do I need to be vaccinated to travel?

Your GP, practice nurse or a travel health professional can explain what travel vaccinations you need and how to arrange them. If possible, you should speak to them at least 8 weeks before you are going to travel. Some vaccines must be given in advance, so they work as well as possible. Other vaccines involve having a few doses spread over several weeks or months.

You may also need to time the vaccinations around any cancer treatment you are having. Your cancer doctor can give you information about this. Some vaccinations are not safe to have during or soon after cancer treatment. Others are much more effective if you have them before cancer treatment starts.

Sometimes, it is not possible to have a vaccination at all. This may mean you cannot travel safely to some parts of the world.

It is also important to keep up to date with routine vaccinations. Doctors usually recommend that people with cancer have regular flu vaccination and a [coronavirus \(covid\) vaccination](#).

Most vaccinations are given as an injection. If you have swelling in an arm (lymphoedema) or a risk of developing lymphoedema, avoid having injections in the affected limb if possible. You can find out more about [travelling with lymphoedema](#).

## Where can I get travel vaccinations?

Your GP, practice nurse or a travel health professional can give you information about where to get travel vaccinations. It can depend on where you are in the UK and the vaccinations you need. Some vaccinations are available free through the NHS. But there are some that you have to pay for, even if they are recommended for travel to a certain area.



## Live vaccines

Live vaccines use small amounts of a live virus or bacteria that has been weakened. They are also called attenuated vaccines. Live vaccines are not usually able to cause the infection. But they help your body develop white blood cells to protect against the infection. These are called antibodies.

If you have a weakened immune system, live vaccines may cause a serious or life-threatening infection. This means you must not have live vaccines if you:

- are having, or recently had, chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- have had an organ, stem cell or bone marrow transplant
- are having some types of targeted therapy or immunotherapy drugs
- had some types of targeted therapy or immunotherapy drugs in the past year
- are taking, or have recently taken, high doses of steroids or immunosuppressive medicines – these are drugs that weaken the immune system.

Your immune system improves gradually after you finish cancer treatment. How long this takes varies. It is important to ask your cancer doctor for advice. If you need live vaccines to travel, your cancer doctor can explain when it may be safe to have these.

Your travel health clinic, GP surgery or pharmacist may need a letter from your cancer doctor confirming that you are not immunosuppressed and that it is safe for you to have live vaccines.

Some people have to avoid live vaccines for the rest of their lives. Always talk to your cancer doctor about whether you can have live vaccines if you have, or have had:

- lymphoma – this is cancer of the lymph nodes
- leukaemia – this is cancer of the white blood cells
- a cancer that is related to a human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

You must never have the yellow fever vaccine if you have thymus gland cancer or have had your thymus removed for any reason. The thymus is a small gland in the chest between the lungs, which helps your body fight infection.

You need to speak with your doctor and think carefully before visiting a country with a risk of yellow fever because you will not be protected against this serious infection.

## **Which vaccines are live?**

Live vaccines include:

- flu nasal spray (not the flu injection)
- measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)
- shingles
- oral typhoid capsule
- yellow fever
- some types of cholera vaccine
- dengue fever.

## Inactivated vaccines

Inactivated vaccines use a virus or bacteria that has been killed. These vaccines are safe to have after cancer treatment. But they may be less effective if you have them when your immune system is weak.

### Which vaccines are inactivated?

Inactivated vaccines include:

- some types of cholera vaccine
- coronavirus (covid)
- diphtheria, tetanus and polio (a combined vaccine)
- flu injection
- hepatitis A
- hepatitis B
- human papilloma virus (HPV)
- Japanese encephalitis
- meningitis
- pneumonia
- rabies
- tick-borne encephalitis
- typhoid injection.

# Coronavirus (covid) outbreaks and travel

If you are planning a trip abroad, remember to check the entry requirements of countries you are travelling to. Countries can change their rules for visitors without warning as covid or other infectious outbreaks develop.

Before you travel, check [gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) for information about current infections and outbreaks in other countries. You can also sign up for email alerts to get updates. For each country, you can check if you need to:

- show proof of covid vaccination
- follow rules about covid testing and quarantine
- wear face masks or follow social distancing rules.

All travel carries some risk of infection. If you have a higher risk of severe infection, you may need to think carefully about this before you decide to travel. Your cancer doctor, GP, practice nurse or travel health clinic can help you think through the issues.

We have more information about covid and cancer on our website at [macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus/cancer-and-coronavirus](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/coronavirus/cancer-and-coronavirus)





# Planning ahead

You may find it helpful to use our planning and packing checklist to make sure you are prepared for your trip. Planning ahead can help you avoid problems, so you can relax and enjoy your time away.

The planning and packing checklist suggests general things to think about before you travel as well as important items you may need to pack. There are also reminders about getting vaccinations, taking medicines abroad and dealing with any specific needs.

The other side of the checklist has space for you to write down useful details and emergency contact numbers. You can tear this out and take it on holiday with you, so you have the information available if you need it.

# Telling travel companies about your needs

It is helpful to tell travel companies in advance about any needs you have that could affect your travel. This includes travel agents, airlines, ferry companies and tour operators. It is best to talk to them before you book the trip to make sure the right support will be available.

You could tell them about:

- any problems you have moving around
- whether you need a wheelchair
- equipment or medications you need to take with you
- whether you are likely to need oxygen during the trip due to breathing difficulties
- help or support you may need at different times during your trip
- whether you are travelling with a companion
- whether it would be helpful to sit in an aisle seat – for example, if you have bowel or bladder problems
- your dietary needs.

Try to tell them as much as possible about how cancer affects you personally. This will help them understand what support you may need at different times during your trip.

You might find these tools helpful:

- The Association of British Travel Agents has a checklist for travellers who are disabled or less mobile. You can complete this checklist and give it to travel companies. This will help them understand your needs. Visit [abta.com/accessible-travel](https://abta.com/accessible-travel)
- The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) has a factsheet about travelling with additional needs or a disability. Visit [travelhealthpro.uk/factsheet/80/travelling-with-additional-needs-and-or-disability](https://travelhealthpro.uk/factsheet/80/travelling-with-additional-needs-and-or-disability)

Most travel companies have a medical officer who can help you decide whether it is safe and practical for you to travel. You can contact them before you go on holiday and ask for help to plan your journey. They can usually also be contacted during your trip.

In some cases, companies may ask questions about your condition to check if you are fit to travel. You may be asked to complete a medical information form (MEDIF) or get a letter from your doctor.

We have more information about getting a doctor's letter and [speaking to your healthcare team](#) before you travel.

You can read about fitness to fly on the Civil Aviation Authority website at [caa.co.uk](https://caa.co.uk)

## Sunflower lanyards

The sunflower lanyard scheme aims to help people with non-visible disabilities get support in public places. People with a hidden, or not so obvious, medical condition or disability may choose to wear a green lanyard, wristband or badge with a sunflower design. This shows they have a hidden condition and may need extra support.

Sunflower lanyards are not recognised everywhere. But many UK organisations, shops and travel companies now understand what the lanyard means. You may find it helpful if you need extra support while you are travelling in the UK.

Some organisations provide sunflower lanyards for free. Or you can buy them from [hdsunflower.com/uk/shop/sunflower-lanyards.html](https://hdsunflower.com/uk/shop/sunflower-lanyards.html)

# Air travel

If you have specific needs, it is important to tell your airline at least 48 hours before your flight. They can arrange for people to help you and for equipment to be available. The help you can get may depend on which airport and airline you use.

In the UK and European Union, if you are less mobile, you have the right to free:

- help at arrival points, such as at terminal entrances, train stations, bus terminals and car parks
- help to reach the check-in counter and with registration
- help with moving through the airport – this includes getting to toilets
- help getting on and off the plane
- information about your flight in a way you understand
- help moving around on the plane – this includes getting to toilets.

If you need help with eating, using oxygen, taking medication or using the toilet during a flight, another person must accompany you. The airline will try to make sure you sit next to each other, provided you give them at least 48 hours' notice.

If you use a wheelchair, you cannot take it into the passenger cabin of the plane. Ask the airline to explain what help they can offer instead.

In the UK and European Union, you can travel with up to 2 items of mobility equipment for free on a plane. This equipment could include a wheelchair or walking frame. This does not count as part of your baggage allowance (the maximum amount of luggage you can take on a plane for free).

Contact your airline in advance to explain what equipment you plan to take, and ask if there are any restrictions. We have more information about [taking medicines and equipment abroad](#).

## **Airport security**

Before flying, all passengers, baggage and mobility equipment must go through airport security checks. This may include metal detector checks, scans and hand searches. You cannot fly if you refuse to have airport security checks.

The processes for airport security can vary between countries and airports. In general, any security checks should be done sensitively. Security staff are trained to handle sensitive medical issues and to treat passengers with respect.

The following tips may also help make things as easy as possible:

- Carry a card or doctor's letter that briefly describes your condition and gives information about any artificial or false body part (prosthesis), implants or stoma. You may want to show this to security staff as you enter the security area.
- It may also be helpful to carry a doctor's letter explaining if you need to take medicines, syringes, needles or other medical equipment.
- [If you have a stoma](#), your stoma care nurse, equipment supplier or delivery company may be able to give you a travel certificate that explains your situation in different languages. This may also be available from a stoma support group.
- Consider wearing a sunflower lanyard if you have a non-visible disability.
- If you wear a wig, you do not usually need to have any extra security checks. But if a security officer wants to check your wig, you can ask them to use a hand-held scanner. This should mean you do not need to remove it. Very rarely, a security officer may want you to remove the wig. If this happens, you can ask to do this in a private space.

## Body searches

Sometimes people are randomly chosen to have a body search. If you are asked to have a body search, you can request that the search is done by a security officer of a specific gender. The body search is done in a private, lockable room. A family member or friend can come with you. You will not be left alone with just 1 security officer.

## Body scanning

Full body security scanners are used at some airports. Travellers are chosen at random to have a body scan. Or you may be chosen if you have activated a metal detector.

The purpose of a body scanner is to show whether you have hidden weapons or banned items. But the image also shows if you have a stoma, external prosthesis or an implant such as a replacement knee or hip.

Small metal implants that are sometimes used for radiotherapy are usually not detected by airport scans.

If you are chosen, here are some things to know:

- The scan takes just a few seconds. You have it in the security area, with a member of airport staff present.
- You can ask for a security officer of a specific gender to check your scan on the screen.
- You can ask for a body search instead of a body scan, if you prefer. This is a thorough hand search. You may be asked to loosen or take off some clothing.

After the scan, only you and a security officer see an outline of your body on a small screen. No body features or skin can be seen. You cannot be identified from the image and you do not meet the security officer. Your scan is permanently deleted after a security officer has looked at it.

The policy on body scanning may vary at airports in different countries outside of the UK. If you are travelling to a country where you do not speak the language, you may wish to contact the embassy for that country. They can give you details of their policy on body scanning.



# Parking and driving

In the UK, the Blue Badge scheme generally allows you to park for free in restricted areas if you have severe mobility problems. You can find out more about the Blue Badge and other driving schemes and concessions in the UK from your local council or [gov.uk/transport/blue-badges](https://www.gov.uk/transport/blue-badges)

The Blue Badge is also recognised across Europe, but the rules differ between countries. It is important to check in advance where, when and for how long you can park with your Blue Badge. The government has published a guide to using a Blue Badge in the EU. Visit [gov.uk/government/publications/blue-badge-using-it-in-the-eu](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blue-badge-using-it-in-the-eu)

You can find more information about driving in specific countries on the following websites:

- the AA – visit [theaa.com/driving-advice](https://www.theaa.com/driving-advice)
- the RAC – visit [rac.co.uk/drive/travel](https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/travel)

The International Automobile Federation has a guide for travellers who are disabled. Visit [disabledmotorists.eu](https://www.disabledmotorists.eu) to find out more about driving and parking in different countries. You can also download and print a Parking Card, which explains in the local language that you are disabled. You can leave this next to your Blue Badge when you park.

# Rail travel

It is a good idea to check with railway companies in advance whether specific train lines and stations are suitable for your needs. Many trains in the UK and abroad are wheelchair accessible. You can ask about:

- train compartments for people who use a wheelchair
- lifts or ramps to access the train
- help from trained staff with getting on and off the train
- toilets suitable for travellers who are disabled.

In the UK, National Rail runs a Passenger Assist scheme. You can book help at any station for any train journey. Call National Rail for free on **0800 022 3720** (textphone **0845 605 0600**) and give details of your planned journey, up to 2 hours before your journey is going to start, any time of the day.

You can check if a UK railway station has accessible facilities by visiting [nationalrail.co.uk/stations\\_destinations](https://nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations)

In other countries, contact the railway company to ask what help is available during your journey. You can also check the information on the railway company's website. There is a list of European railway company websites at [eurail.com](https://eurail.com)

In England, Scotland and Wales, a Disabled Persons Railcard gives people who are disabled or have a progressive medical condition cheaper rail fares. If you are travelling with another adult, they also get the discount. To apply for a Railcard, visit [disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](https://disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk)

In Northern Ireland, for information about fares for travellers who are disabled, call Translink on **0289 066 6630** (textphone 18001 **028 9066 6630**) or visit [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/free-and-concessionary-bus-and-rail-travel](https://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/free-and-concessionary-bus-and-rail-travel)

We have more information about transport schemes and concessions in the UK. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/transport-parking](https://macmillan.org.uk/transport-parking)

Similar travel discounts may be available in some other countries.



# Sea travel

If you are disabled or have problems moving around and are travelling by ship from the UK or Europe, you have a legal right to free help. Tell the carrier, travel agent or tour operator when you book, or at least 48 hours before you travel, if you need:

- help getting on and off the ship
- special accommodation
- special seating
- to bring any medical equipment with you.

The facilities available on ships can vary. Most modern cruise ships have disabled-access cabins. But places may be limited and it is a good idea to book early.

There may be restrictions on taking some medical equipment, such as oxygen cylinders or large mobility aids. This is more likely to be the case if the ship is small and space is limited. Speak to the company before you book the trip to find out more.

Always tell a cruise line or ferry service if you need to travel with a carer. Your carer may be able to travel for free.

If you are worried about sea sickness, ask your GP, cancer doctor or specialist nurse for advice. If you have anti-sickness medicines as part of your cancer treatment, these may help. But check with your doctor first.



# Travel insurance

What is travel insurance?	46
Types of travel insurance	48
Buying travel insurance	52
How cancer affects travel insurance	56
Global and European Health Insurance Cards (GHIC and EHIC)	61
Travel insurance tips	62

# What is travel insurance?

Travel insurance aims to protect you from losing money if something unexpected happens before or during your trip. It also makes sure you can get emergency medical care if you need it.

It is an important thing to think about if you are planning to travel abroad. It can also be useful for some trips in the UK.

Travel insurance usually helps cover the following costs:

- Cancellation or curtailment – if you need to cancel your trip or end it early (curtail it). For example, this could be if you or a family member are ill unexpectedly.
- Personal liability – if you injure someone or damage their property by accident.
- Baggage – if your belongings are lost or stolen.
- Emergency medical treatment if you are abroad – you usually have to pay for healthcare in other countries and this can be very expensive. Insurance may help cover the cost of any emergency care you need, including ambulances.
- Repatriation if you are abroad – this means getting you back home safely. For example, insurance may cover the costs of flying you home if you need an air ambulance, medical equipment, a medical escort or a carer. A medical escort is a health professional or group of health professionals who travel with you on a commercial flight home. They can provide care and assistance if you are unwell.

You do not have to take out travel insurance. But if you travel without insurance and something happens, you usually have to cover these costs yourself.

For travel abroad, you could end up paying large amounts of money. For example, you may have to pay for medical care that would have been free in the UK. Unlike the UK, many countries do not provide free healthcare, even in emergencies.

Before you buy travel insurance, it is important to check what it will and will not cover. This varies, so read the terms carefully before you buy.

**“ I found that many travel insurance companies do not understand risks around cancer. They assume that having regular check-ups means you are at more risk of needing emergency treatment. ”**

Paul, diagnosed with tonsil cancer



# Types of travel insurance

There are 2 main types of travel insurance:

- Single-trip insurance covers you for 1 trip. You need to take out a new policy each time you travel.
- Annual (or multi-trip) insurance covers you for more than 1 trip in the same year.

If you have an annual travel policy and are diagnosed with cancer during the period of your cover, you should tell your insurance company. This also applies to family members' insurance policies, if there is a risk they may have to cancel a holiday because of your health. So check all policies to be sure.

## Premiums and excess payments

The premium is the amount of money you pay for the travel insurance policy. The more likely the provider thinks you are to claim, the more they ask you to pay.

The excess is the amount of money you pay if you make a claim. The excess is usually taken away from the final claim payment. For example, if the excess on the policy is £50 and you make a successful claim for £250, the insurer pays you £200.

Make sure you understand how the excess amount is applied because it can vary. You may have no excess to pay. Or a single excess amount may be applied for the whole claim.

But most travel insurance policies have different excess amounts for:

- each type of claim – for example, the excess for lost luggage will be different to the excess for medical expenses
- each person claiming, if more than 1 person is covered by the policy.

This means each person making a claim may pay a separate excess for each type of claim.

## Winter sports and other activities

Standard travel insurance policies do not usually cover high-risk activities such as:

- winter sports – for example, skiing
- helicopter trips
- scuba diving
- mountain biking
- bungee jumping.

If you want cover for these activities while you are away, check whether your insurance provider will cover them. You may need to pay more for the insurance policy.

Travel insurance providers usually ask if you plan to do any of these activities when they give you a quote. But it is important to check the details of any policy before you buy. Make sure it covers the activities you want it to.

You may be able to pay to extend a standard policy so that it covers any extra activities you are doing. For example, most policies will cover winter sports trips if you select and pay for it.

If it is not possible to add cover in this way, you may need to buy a specialist policy. These are sometimes advertised as activity travel insurance, adventure travel insurance or sports travel insurance.

Some policies contain exclusions, which mean you are not covered in certain situations. For example, the policy may not cover skiing off-piste (outside a ski resort) without a guide, or cycling without a helmet.

Remember to check that your travel insurance covers any sports or activity equipment you want to take with you. You can also protect your belongings under your home insurance policy.

## Cruise holidays

Some travel insurance policies do not cover cruise holidays. If you have annual insurance and plan to go on a cruise during that year, check that your policy covers you before you book.

It is also worth checking exactly what the policy covers before you buy. For example, some policies may pay you compensation if you have to stay in your cabin to stop an illness spreading (cabin confinement). But this may not be included and you may have to pay more to add this cover to the policy.

**“ I found an insurance company and was eventually offered cover for my trip to America. The cover simply excluded injury from dangerous sports. ”**

Peter, diagnosed with a brain tumour

# Buying travel insurance

Before you buy travel insurance, it is a good idea to check if you already have cover and that it covers you for all your medical conditions. Sometimes, travel insurance may be offered as a benefit with your:

- bank or building society account
- credit card
- home insurance.

## Getting quotes

If you do not already have cover, try to get quotes from different insurance providers before you buy. This can help you get the best travel insurance cover for your needs. It could also help you save money.

You can ask for insurance quotes from:

- insurance companies
- travel insurance comparison sites
- some supermarkets – they may have information leaflets about their insurance in stores
- your bank or building society.

MoneyHelper has a directory of companies that offer travel insurance to people affected by a serious medical condition or disability.

Visit [moneyhelper.org.uk/travel-insurance-directory](https://moneyhelper.org.uk/travel-insurance-directory)

You may find it helpful to use our questions or travel insurance comparison table to compare any quotes you get.

## Questions to ask

The following questions may help you check whether a travel insurance policy has the cover you want.

Does the policy cover:

- the places and dates of the trip
- other people you are travelling with – some policies cover families or groups travelling together
- the type of trip and activities you plan to do – cruises and high-risk activities may need extra cover
- the things you are taking – for example, this could include medical or sports equipment
- if you cannot travel or need medical treatment during the trip for a condition you have already
- if you cannot travel or need medical treatment during the trip due to coronavirus (covid)?

You may also want to check how much:

- the policy costs (the premium)
- you will have to pay towards any claims you make (the excess).

**“ I decided that peace of mind was important, especially when visiting countries further away. So I started to shop around and found 2 insurance companies. I went to Dubai for a week and my insurance company covered any cancer-related treatment. It was a complete game-changer! ”**

Michael, diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma

## Travel insurance comparison

This table is for you to compare the policies and quotes of different insurance providers. You can write down the contact details of each provider and some of the important details of their policy.

<b>Contact details</b>			
<b>Amount of cover</b>			
<b>Includes cover if trip is cancelled or ends early?</b>			
<b>Includes cover if returning to the UK in an emergency?</b>			
<b>Exclusion for cancer?</b>			
<b>Exclusion for anything else?</b>			
<b>Excess</b>	£	£	
<b>Quote</b>	£	£	

In the bottom rows, you can compare the excess costs and the quotes that different providers give you. This may help you decide on the best insurance policy for your situation.

£	£	£
£	£	£



# How cancer affects travel insurance

It is important to tell insurance providers about a cancer diagnosis or other pre-existing medical conditions. A pre-existing medical condition means a health condition that you already have or have had in the past.

Some travel insurance policies do not cover claims related in any way to pre-existing medical conditions. You can ask if the insurance provider will allow you to pay a top-up fee to include this cover.

There are companies that specialise in providing travel insurance for people with pre-existing medical conditions, including cancer. They may offer you a policy that covers these kinds of claims, provided that:

- you have told the insurer about all pre-existing medical conditions
- the medical conditions have been accepted by the insurer in writing.

You may need to pay extra for a policy that covers claims related to cancer. This is because the insurance provider estimates there is a higher chance something will happen that means you claim for medical expenses or cancel your trip.

You should always tell your insurer about pre-existing medical conditions. And you must answer any questions they ask fully and accurately. If you do not and you later need to make a claim for anything, the insurer could refuse to pay or cancel your policy. They may do this even if your claim is not related to a pre-existing condition.

Your health or prescribed medication may change between the time that you buy the policy and when you travel. Always tell your insurance provider if there are any changes or new information about your health during this time.

## Medical screening

Travel insurance providers may ask for information about your health before they give you a quote or agree to insure you. They may [ask for a doctor's letter](#) confirming you are fit to travel. Or they may ask you some questions about your health. This is called medical screening. It helps the insurance provider work out how much your policy will cost.

It is helpful to have your details and medical information ready before you contact a travel insurance provider. They may ask you questions on the phone or through an online form. When you have a medical condition, it is often easier to explain your situation to someone directly on the phone.

Some questions may be upsetting. For example, the insurance provider may ask about the likely outcome of the cancer (the prognosis). This can be difficult to talk about. You may find it easier to contact only 1 or 2 insurance providers at a time.

Many companies provide insurance quotes using the same medical screening questions and a computer system. If the questions are not suitable for your situation, tell the insurance provider. It is important they understand your situation fully so they can offer a policy that is right for you.

## What questions will they ask?

This list includes some common things travel insurance providers may ask you about. You may find it helpful to write down your answers before you contact them to ask for a quote.

Insurance providers may ask you about:

- where and when you are travelling
- the length of your trip
- any health conditions you have
- any ongoing tests you are having
- when you were diagnosed
- where the cancer is or was
- whether the cancer has spread to other parts of the body
- what treatment you have had or are having
- any surgery you have had or plan to have
- details of medicines you take
- any symptoms or side effects you have
- how advanced the cancer is
- details of GP, hospital or specialist visits about the cancer over the last year
- whether the health of anyone else could affect the planned trip – this could be someone travelling with you or someone at home
- any medical equipment you need for travel
- any winter sports, extreme sports or other high-risk activities you plan to do on your trip.

## Cancer-related exclusion

If your travel insurance policy has a cancer-related exclusion, you are not covered for any claims related to the cancer or its treatment. Make sure you understand exactly what is and is not included under your policy. Always check with the insurance provider if you are unsure.

You do not have to buy travel insurance that covers claims related to cancer. But you should think carefully about how you would:

- manage any cancer-related problems when you are away
- pay for any unexpected costs, such as medical bills or extra medicines.

## Taking medical equipment abroad

If you need to take any special medical equipment to travel abroad, make sure your insurance covers this.

**“ I booked a cruise over the phone while I was in hospital. I told my Macmillan physiotherapist what I had done and she said, ‘We will do our best to get you to walk.’ So my wife and I went – I had the 3-wheeler to help me walk. ”**

David, diagnosed with throat cancer

## If someone close to you has cancer

You need to tell your insurance provider if the health of someone close to you may affect your trip. For example, if someone close to you has cancer, there may be a risk your trip may have to end early or be cancelled because of their health.

The provider may not ask questions about this. But if you want this type of cover, it is important to check whether the policy offers it before you buy.

**“ I understand the risk and make sensible decisions about when and where to travel based on my disease. I use the EHIC to cover me when I am in Europe. But my kidney cancer is excluded. ”**

Martin, diagnosed with kidney cancer

# Global and European Health Insurance Cards (GHIC and EHIC)

You can use a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in some countries to show you have a right to state-provided healthcare.

This means you have the right to access the medical treatment a resident of that country would receive at the same price.

Having a GHIC or EHIC is not the same as having travel insurance. A GHIC or EHIC only covers emergency or necessary medical care. And they never pay for repatriation – getting you back home safely. So you should make sure you have travel insurance as well.

We have more details about using a GHIC and EHIC in our information about [getting emergency healthcare abroad](#).

# Travel insurance tips

If you are planning a trip or thinking about it, it can help to talk to other people who are in the same situation.

Many people talk about travel insurance with cancer cover on the Macmillan Online Community. We have a monthly travel insurance blog and a forum about travel insurance for people with cancer at [macmillan.org.uk/travelinsurancegroup](https://macmillan.org.uk/travelinsurancegroup)

You can find out which insurers people are recommending. Remember, you need to find an insurer who can give you cover that is suitable for your needs. There are also tips about buying travel insurance and travelling abroad when you or someone you know is affected by cancer.

You do not have to join the Online Community to read what people are saying.

You can also call the Macmillan Support Line free on 0808 808 00 00 to speak to one of our financial guides.

We cannot recommend individual travel insurance providers for you. But we can give you some general tips on speaking to providers. We can also tell you about your options if you are not happy with the service a provider has given you.

You can learn more about travel insurance for a trip abroad. Visit [gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance](https://gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance)

**“ I discovered an insurance company through Macmillan's Online Community. I have used them many times. They covered me for a month when I travelled to Australia and New Zealand. ”**

Hayley, diagnosed with throat cancer





# Travelling with medicines

Advice from your healthcare team	66
Check country restrictions	68
Have enough medicine for your trip	69
Storing and carrying medicines	70
Taking medicines at the right time	72
Oxygen	74

# Advice from your healthcare team

If you are planning a trip abroad, ask your cancer doctor, specialist nurse, GP, practice nurse, pharmacist or travel health clinic for advice about medicines you need to take. Try to talk to them as early as possible before your trip. We have more information about [talking to a health professional](#).

They can tell you if you need to make any special arrangements. You may need a letter from your doctor and copies of your prescriptions to take some types of medicine into or out of the UK. These are called controlled drugs.

They include painkillers, such as opioids or morphine-like medicines. You can check if a medicine is a controlled drug at [gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs](https://gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs)

The letter from your doctor should include:

- your name
- what countries you are visiting and when
- a list of your medicines, including the doses, strengths and how much you are taking with you
- the signature of the person who prescribed the controlled drug.

Having a letter from your doctor is also helpful if you need to take the following with you:

- syringes
- needles
- stoma supplies
- portable medicine pumps – these are small devices that give liquid medicines into your body in a controlled way.

The following organisations have more detailed information about travelling with medicines:

- National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC)  
– visit [travelhealthpro.org.uk](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk)
- Fit for Travel – visit [fitfortravel.nhs.uk](https://fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

# Check country restrictions

Some countries restrict or limit the drugs that can be taken into or out of the country. Medicines you can buy over the counter in the UK may be restricted in other countries.

If you are taking medicines abroad with you, it is important to check with the country's embassy or high commission. You can find details of foreign embassies in the UK at [gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk)



# Have enough medicine for your trip

Make sure you have medicine supplies to last your whole trip and to cover possible delays. Your doctor may be able to prescribe a longer supply than they usually do for you. But there may be a limit to how much they can prescribe.

If you cannot get supplies for your whole trip, you may need to check whether you can get your medicines in the country you are visiting. You may be able to register with a local doctor or buy medicines from a pharmacist while you are away.

Be aware that the quality of medicines can vary in other countries. Fake medicines may be a problem, especially if you buy supplies online or in some areas outside Europe and North America. Fake medicines may have the same or similar packaging to the real ones. But they have the wrong, or harmful, ingredients. Or they have low levels of the active and most important ingredient.

If you plan to travel with more than 3 months' supply of a controlled drug, get advice from the Home Office before leaving or entering the UK. Visit [gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs](https://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs)

# Storing and carrying medicines

The guidance about carrying medicines varies depending on where and how you are travelling. It also depends on the type and amount of medicine you want to take with you. Always check and follow the advice of the airline or other transport company you are travelling with.

For security and customs checks, it is usually best to carry all medicines and letters from your doctor or other paperwork in your hand luggage. Keep medicines in their original packaging, because it is important they are clearly labelled. Carrying your medicines in your hand luggage also means you have them with you if you need them during the journey.

You may also want to consider carrying a supply of medications in your hand luggage and another in your suitcase. That way, if a set goes missing, you still have the other.

It can also help to keep a list of:

- the medicines you are taking
- the doses
- how many times a day you take them.

This will help you get replacements if you lose your medicines. Always use the generic names of the medicines because brand names can vary from country to country.

## Flying with liquid medicines

Most liquids in your hand luggage are restricted to a maximum of 100ml. But you are allowed to carry more than 100ml of liquid medicines if you need these during the flight – this includes liquid diets and inhalers.

You must bring a supporting document from your doctor or another medical professional. This could be a letter or signed prescription.

You can check hand luggage rules with your airline and the airport before you travel. Airport staff may open containers to check the liquid medicines when you go through security.

For more information about carrying liquids in your hand luggage, visit [gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions](https://www.gov.uk/hand-luggage-restrictions)

## Keeping medicines cool

It is best to keep medicines dry, cool and out of direct sunlight. The shelf life of a medicine is the period when it can be safely used. The shelf life of some medicines may be reduced if they are not kept at the correct temperature. Ask your pharmacist for advice.

Some medicines must be stored in a fridge. If you are taking medicines that must be kept at certain temperatures, you can buy small cool bags from your chemist or pharmacy.

Be careful that your medicines do not freeze, because this may affect how they work. You can check with your hotel whether there will be a fridge in your room. If not, ask whether your medicines can be stored somewhere secure and kept cool but not frozen.

You may find it helpful to have a simple fridge thermometer to check the storage temperature. This should be 2°C to 8°C (36°F to 46°F) for medicines stored in the fridge.



# Taking medicines at the right time

If you are travelling across international time zones, this is likely to affect the time you take your regular medicines. If the time difference is only a couple of hours, you may be able to take your medicines at the usual UK times.

If there is a time difference of several hours, this may not be possible. It may be better to gradually change the times you take your medicines to fit in with the local time. Ask your GP, practice nurse, pharmacist or travel health clinic for advice about this.



# Oxygen

If you use oxygen, make sure you arrange any supplies you need before you travel.

If you are planning a trip in the UK, you can arrange supplies through your usual oxygen provider. You need to tell them the dates you are travelling and where you will be staying. You must also check that the place where you will be staying can have oxygen delivered and stored there.

If you need oxygen on a flight or cruise, check with your doctor that you are fit to travel before you book your trip.

If you plan to fly, you may need a fit-to-fly test. Your GP can help you complete this. It shows whether you need oxygen during the flight. You should also contact your airline for advice. It is best to do this well before your journey. They can explain their policy about taking oxygen on the plane and whether you need a medical certificate.

We have more information about [air travel](#).

If you are going on a cruise, contact the cruise company well in advance and tell them you use oxygen supplies. They can then advise you how to arrange this. Some cruise ships have emergency onboard medical facilities. But they are not usually free and are not included in the price of the cruise.

We have more advice about [cruise travel](#).

If you plan to travel to another country, you will need to contact an oxygen supplier for the country you are going to visit. You can:

- ask your usual oxygen supplier for advice about overseas oxygen providers that you can contact
- search online for a provider.

If you have a [Global or European Health Insurance Card \(GHIC or EHIC\)](#), you can use this to help pay for oxygen in some countries. You must use an authorised oxygen company for the country you are visiting.

For more information, visit [asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/travel/oxygen](https://asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/travel/oxygen).



# Taking care while you are away

Eating and drinking	78
Animals and rabies	80
Insects	82
Taking care in the sun	86
If you become ill	90

# Eating and drinking

Wherever you are in the world, be careful about what you eat and drink. Many infections are spread by food and water. This can include water in:

- swimming pools
- lakes
- rivers
- seas
- oceans.

If you are at risk of infection because of cancer treatment, you need to be extra careful about what you eat and drink. Infections can be more serious and difficult to treat if your immune system is weak. Make sure you get advice before your trip.

You can find information about the risks of contaminated food and water in specific countries at:

- [travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries) if you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland
- [fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations](https://fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations) if you live in Scotland.

## Tips for avoiding stomach problems

- One of the best ways to reduce your risk is to wash your hands regularly. Always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, and before eating or preparing food or drink. If there is no clean water, use disposable wipes or alcohol hand gel.
- Try not to swallow water when you are swimming. If you are not sure the water is clean, try not to swallow water when you are brushing your teeth, showering or having a bath.
- Drink bottled water unless you know the water is clean. You can also use this to brush your teeth. Check that seals on bottled water are not broken before you open them.
- If you are not sure the drinking water is clean, sterilise it. You can do this by boiling it for 1 minute, or by using a filtering system or sterilisation tablets.
- Avoid ice in drinks, unless you are sure it is made from safe water.
- Cooked food is safest. Try to choose freshly cooked food that is still steaming hot. Avoid pre-prepared foods that are not kept hot or have not been kept refrigerated – for example, avoid buffets. Also avoid reheating leftovers.
- Avoid raw and undercooked food. This includes raw fruit and vegetables, unless you can peel them or remove the outer skin or shell yourself.
- Fish and shellfish can be harmful even when cooked. If you are worried or have a weakened immune system, avoid eating these.
- Only drink or eat pasteurised milk or dairy products. Avoid or boil unpasteurised milk.
- Avoid ice cream from unreliable sources, such as street stalls. Only eat ice cream made from pasteurised milk.



# Animals and rabies

Animal bites and scratches can cause dangerous infections.

It is important to be careful and avoid contact with animals abroad, even if they seem harmless. Animals in many places, especially in Asia, Africa, and Central and South America, can carry rabies. This is a rare, but very serious, infection of the brain and nerves. It is not found in the UK, except in a small number of wild bats.

You can find information about the risk of rabies in specific countries at:

- [travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries) if you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland
- [fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations](https://fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations) if you live in Scotland.

If you are travelling to an area where rabies is common, you can have a vaccine before you travel.

Rabies is usually caught from the bite or scratch of an infected animal, such as a dog. Any animal can carry rabies, including pets. An animal licking an open wound or spitting in your face can also put you at risk. It is important to treat any wound straight away and get urgent medical help.

If you have treatment for rabies before any symptoms appear, it is very effective. But once symptoms appear, rabies is usually fatal. If you are scratched or bitten, or if an animal spits in your face, it is important to follow these steps:

- 1.** Clean the wound with soap and running water, or wash your face straight away for several minutes. If there is any rabies virus on the wound surface or in your eyes, nose or mouth, this can help wash some of it away and reduce the risk.
- 2.** Use an antiseptic containing alcohol or iodine to disinfect the wound.
- 3.** See a doctor straight away, even if you had the rabies vaccine before you travelled. You will need extra treatment urgently.

For further information, visit the NHS webpage on rabies.

Visit [nhs.uk/conditions/rabies](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/rabies)

# Insects

Insect bites and stings are often not serious. But they can become infected. And sometimes they can spread illnesses.

If you are planning to travel abroad, you can find information about the risk of illness from insect bites in specific countries at:

- [travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries) if you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland
- [fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations](https://fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations) if you live in Scotland.

The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) also has a factsheet about preventing insect and tick bites at [travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/38/insect-and-tick-bite-avoidance)

Depending on where you are travelling, vaccines or malaria tablets may help reduce your risk of some illnesses. You may also need to take extra care to avoid bites. For example, you may need to wear protective clothing or use insect repellent and a mosquito net.

Wherever you travel, and especially if you have a [risk of lymphoedema](#) or serious infection, it is best to try to prevent insect bites. This helps reduce your risk, but you still need to check for bites.

If you do get bitten, try not to scratch. If you have signs of an infection, get advice from a doctor straight away – this includes flu-like symptoms, a high temperature, redness, a rash or heat in the affected part of the body, and increased swelling.

You can help prevent insect bites by:

- covering up your skin as much as possible, especially if you go out at night – wear long sleeves, trousers and shoes when outdoors
- using insect repellent, preferably containing up to 50% DEET (diethyl-m-toluamide) – this is the main ingredient that makes insect repellent work.

If you are travelling abroad, the most common illness spread by mosquitos is malaria. Others include dengue fever and yellow fever.

In the UK, [Lyme disease](#) can be spread by infected ticks.

## **Malaria**

Malaria is a risk in many tropical parts of the world. It is a disease spread by mosquito bites. You are more at risk of being seriously ill with malaria if your immune system is affected by the type of cancer you have or by cancer treatment.

Think very carefully about your travel plans and get advice from your cancer doctor and a travel health clinic before you book a trip to anywhere with a risk of malaria. If your spleen has been removed, [we have more information](#).

The symptoms of malaria are similar to flu and can include:

- a high temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or above
- feeling hot, shivery or sweaty
- a headache
- being sick
- muscle pains or tenderness
- diarrhoea
- a cough
- generally feeling unwell.

If you decide to travel to an area at risk of malaria, try to avoid infection using the ABCD of malaria prevention:

- **A**wareness of risk – find out how common malaria is where you are travelling.
- **B**ite prevention – use insect repellent, cover your arms and legs with suitable clothing, and use mosquito nets if necessary.
- **C**heck whether you need to take anti-malarial tablets.
- **D**iagnosing and treating malaria straight away is very important. If you have symptoms, get medical help immediately.

For more information about malaria, visit [nhs.uk/conditions/malaria](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/malaria)

## Lyme disease

Lyme disease is more common in North America and other parts of Europe than in the UK. But it is important to know about if you are spending time outdoors in grassy or wooded areas.

Symptoms may include:

- a red or oval rash that looks like a bullseye and spreads out from the bite – this usually appears 1 to 4 weeks after the bite, but can appear up to 3 months later
- flu-like symptoms such as high temperature, feeling hot, shivery or sweaty, a headache, and muscle and joint pains – these may happen a few days or weeks after the bite.

Lyme disease is not always serious, but it can cause ongoing and severe symptoms. Some people develop more severe symptoms months or years later. The risk of tick bites is highest in grassy and wooded areas. To help reduce the risk of tick bites, you can:

- tuck your trousers into your socks if you are walking outdoors
- use insect repellent
- stay on clear paths if you can
- check your clothes and skin for ticks regularly and after spending time outdoors – tick bites are not always painful or obvious, so remember to check all areas of your body
- learn how to remove a tick safely.

Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. This is more effective the earlier you have the antibiotics. If you think you have been bitten and you have flu-like symptoms or a round or oval rash, tell your doctor as soon as possible. For more information about Lyme disease and possible symptoms, visit [nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease)

# Taking care in the sun

It is always important to protect your skin from the sun. You may need to be more careful during and after cancer treatment. Some cancer treatments make your skin more sensitive to the sun and you may burn more easily. You may also have a higher risk of overheating and becoming unwell.

## If you have had chemotherapy

Some chemotherapy drugs can make your skin more sensitive. This can sometimes last for several years after treatment. Ask your cancer doctor or specialist nurse whether you need to take special care to protect your skin.

Some people also find chemotherapy makes their skin sensitive to chemicals, such as chlorine. You may need to avoid swimming in pools treated with chlorine. It is best to avoid hot tubs and saunas because bacteria and other germs grow faster in warm water.



## **If you have had radiotherapy**

The skin in the area treated by radiotherapy stays sensitive for many years. You need to take extra care to protect it from the sun, especially for the first year. The skin in that area is at a higher risk of burning and long-term sun damage, including skin cancers.

## **If you have had targeted or immunotherapy drugs**

Many targeted therapy and immunotherapy drugs can make your skin sensitive to the sun. Your skin may burn more easily than normal. Ask your doctor or nurse whether you need to take special care to protect your skin.

## **Tips for protecting yourself in the sun**

It is important to protect your skin by using a suncream with both a:

- high sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30
- 4-star or 5-star ultraviolet A radiation (UVA) protection rating.

The SPF and UVA rating measure how well the suncream will protect you from the sun's rays, which can cause skin cancer. Follow the instructions and reapply regularly as recommended, particularly after swimming or washing.



When you are in the sun, you can also protect yourself by wearing a wide-brimmed hat, suitable sunglasses and clothing to cover up. Sunglasses with the most protection for your eyes have wraparound lenses or wide arms, and they have either:

- a CE mark



- the British Standards Institution Kitemark™



Following these tips will also help make sure your skin does not burn:

- Cover up with long-sleeved tops and trousers or long skirts. If you have had radiotherapy, keep the treated area completely covered.
- Wear light, loose and comfortable clothes made of cotton or natural fibres. These have a closer weave and give better protection from the sun.
- If you have lost your hair or it is thinning, cover up with a hat or headscarf to protect your scalp. If you do not want to cover your head, use suncream that has an SPF of at least 30 on your scalp.
- If you are using insect repellent, apply your suncream first and then spray the repellent on top.
- Spend time in the shade during the hottest part of the day between 11am and 3pm, and when it is sunny.
- If you want to look tanned, use fake-tanning lotions or sprays instead of sunbathing or using a sunbed.

If you are in a hot country, you may also need to do the following:

- Try to keep cool and spend time in the shade, even at other times of the day. Heat can make cancer-related fatigue (tiredness) worse.
- Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day, unless your doctor or nurse has given you advice about restricting how much you drink. Remember that alcohol or drinks with caffeine in them can make you dehydrated.

**“ Now I am just extra careful.  
I make sure that I am using a lot  
of sunscreen and I always wear a hat.  
I am much more aware of the risks. ”**

Andrew, diagnosed with skin cancer

# If you become ill

It is sensible to think about what you will do if you become ill while you are away. Being prepared can make things easier and less stressful if this happens.

## Travel insurance

If you have travel insurance for the trip, pack your policy document and helpline number in your hand luggage. If you become unwell, you may need to contact the insurance provider to get their advice or assistance. Read your policy carefully and make sure you understand what to do if you need their help. We have more information about [travel insurance](#).

## Emergency contacts

You may want to take contact details for close family or friends with you. Check that the details are up to date. In an emergency, someone can contact them if you are not able to.

If you travel abroad, you can keep these contact details with your passport. British consular officials protect UK citizens in a foreign country. They can contact people for you if needed and can help if you need to return to the UK quickly. You may need to pay a fee for this. Visit [gov.uk/world/embassies](https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies) for more information.

## Planning for unexpected costs

Becoming unwell can mean unexpected costs, especially if you are travelling abroad. Even if you have travel insurance, you may need to pay for some things yourself. Or you may have to pay and then make a claim to get money back.

The next sections give some information about getting healthcare if you are travelling in the UK or abroad. But you should do your own research about the places you are visiting and try to think about how you will manage any costs if you become unwell.

If you are able to claim a refund for healthcare costs, the process for this can be complicated and may depend on:

- your travel insurance policy
- whether you have a Global or European Health Insurance Card
- whether you are travelling in a country that has a reciprocal healthcare agreement with the UK.

To apply for a refund, you are likely to need the original invoices, receipts and documents from your treatment. Remember to keep any paperwork and make copies if necessary.

## Unwell in the UK

If you are travelling in the UK, a pharmacist may be able to give you advice about minor illnesses and non-urgent problems. You may be able to get an appointment with a local GP. Or your GP or cancer doctor may be able to give you advice by phone.

Always call 999 for life-threatening emergencies. You can also call:

- 111 in England, Scotland or Wales if you think you need medical help right now
- the GP out-of-hours service in Northern Ireland if you need urgent medical care when GP surgeries are closed – find the contact number for your area at [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service](https://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service)

## Unwell in another country

Before you travel, find out how healthcare works in the countries you will visit and make a note of any emergency services phone numbers. You can find information about specific countries at [gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

If you become unwell and need urgent attention during your trip, contact the emergency services or go to the emergency department of the nearest hospital. If you are staying in a hotel or travelling with a travel company, ask if they can get help or call a doctor for you.

If you have time, try to get advice from a doctor or nurse who speaks the same language as you. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is a government department responsible for protecting British interests around the world. It may be able to help with this.

## Using Global and European Health Insurance Cards (GHIC and EHIC)

You can use a GHIC or EHIC in some countries to show you have a right to state-provided healthcare. If you become unwell, you may be able to show it to access the medical treatment that a resident of that country would receive at the same price.

You can find more information about getting and using a GHIC or EHIC at [nhs.uk/ehic](https://www.nhs.uk/ehic)

The card is free to apply for. You carry it when you travel. What cover you can get depends on the country you are in. The healthcare may not be the same as care in the UK. You may still have to pay part of the cost yourself. Some countries do not accept these cards.

You can check how the GHIC and EHIC work in specific countries at [gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

In some countries, you pay the full cost of any healthcare and then use your card to claim a refund. Keep all receipts and any paperwork. You or your insurance company may need them to apply for a refund.

If you do not have your card with you, you can apply for a Provisional Replacement Certificate (PRC) to use instead. Someone else can apply for you if needed. Contact NHS Overseas Healthcare Services to apply. Visit [nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-overseas-healthcare-services](https://nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-overseas-healthcare-services)

The cards are not a replacement for travel insurance. They only cover emergency or necessary medical care. And they never pay for repatriation – getting you back home safely. So you should make sure you have [travel insurance](#) as well.

## **Countries with mutual healthcare agreements with the UK**

Some countries have a mutual healthcare agreement with the UK. This means they may provide free or reduced-cost healthcare to people from the UK in certain situations. The healthcare may not be the same as care in the UK. You may still have to pay part of the cost yourself.

The agreements often only cover emergency healthcare. They do not usually cover the cost of helping you return to the UK, or routine monitoring of pre-existing medical conditions. For this reason, you still need to get travel insurance.

To claim free or reduced-cost treatment in these countries, you must prove you are a UK resident. This usually involves showing a UK passport.

For an up-to-date list of countries that have a mutual agreement with the UK, visit [nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad)

## **Countries with no healthcare agreements with the UK**

In countries not covered by GHIC, EHIC or a mutual agreement, you must pay the full cost of any healthcare. If you are travelling to these countries, it is important to buy travel insurance that covers any healthcare you may need.

The high commission, consulate or embassy of the country you are visiting may be able to give you information on local healthcare services. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has details of where you can find these and British embassies when you are abroad. Visit [gov.uk/world](https://www.gov.uk/world)







# Travelling with long-term treatment effects

Lymphoedema	98
If your spleen has been removed	102
If you have a stoma	103
If you have bowel or bladder problems	106
If you have a tracheostomy or laryngectomy	110

# Lymphoedema

Lymphoedema is a swelling caused by a build-up of fluid in the body's tissues. It can happen when lymph nodes (glands) have been blocked, damaged or removed because of cancer or its treatment. Lymphoedema can affect any part of the body, but most commonly develops in an arm or a leg.

If you have lymphoedema or a risk of developing it, planning ahead can help you manage any problems and enjoy your time away.

If you have a lymphoedema specialist, talk to them about your travel plans before you go. It is important to continue with your usual routine for managing lymphoedema. There are also other things you need to be careful about when travelling.

We have more information about lymphoedema on our website. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/lymphoedema](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/lymphoedema)

## Before you go

These tips may help you prepare for your trip:

- If you need any vaccinations before your trip, avoid having injections in the affected limb if possible.
- If you are planning a more active holiday, talk to your lymphoedema specialist before you travel. They can give you advice to help you protect the affected area.
- Ask your specialist for information about lymphoedema and air travel. If you are flying a long distance, you may need a compression garment. This should be measured and fitted properly for you by a trained specialist.
- Ask your lymphoedema specialist if there are exercises you should do while you are travelling. These may help prevent a build-up of fluid in the affected area. When booking travel, you could ask for an aisle seat. This gives you more room to move around.
- Ask your GP or lymphoedema specialist if you need to take antibiotics with you. This is in case you develop a skin infection called cellulitis. Cellulitis can become serious if it is not treated quickly. The Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN) has guidance for healthcare professionals on using antibiotics to treat cellulitis when you have lymphoedema. They also have factsheets called 'What is Cellulitis?' and 'Management of Cellulitis in Lymphoedema'. You can download an order form at [lymphoedema.org/shop/clinic-order-form](https://www.lymphoedema.org/shop/clinic-order-form)
- Ask your lymphoedema specialist, pharmacist or travel health clinic for advice about protecting your skin when you are on holiday.

## During your journey

Here are some tips to reduce the risk of getting lymphoedema or making it worse during your journey:

- Avoid sitting in the same position for the whole journey.
- If you have lymphoedema in your arm, try to move it as often as you can. Carry shoulder bags or heavy luggage with the other arm if possible.
- When you are travelling, move around and do gentle stretching exercises regularly. While you are sitting, circle your ankles, move your arms and legs, and try some deep breathing.
- During long car journeys, stop regularly to get out and walk around.
- Try to give yourself plenty of leg room when travelling. To allow space to stretch your legs, do not put anything under the seat in front of you.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes and shoes.
- Wear compression garments or stockings if your lymphoedema specialist advised this. Follow their instructions about when and how long to wear them for.
- Use a wheeled suitcase you can pull, to avoid extra strain on your muscles.
- Ask someone to help you with luggage – especially if you need to lift bags into overhead storage.
- Drink plenty of water, but not too much caffeine and alcohol, to avoid getting dehydrated.

## While you are away

There are things you can do to help with lymphoedema when you are away:

- If you have lymphoedema in your arm, be careful lifting and pulling heavy bags with the affected arm. Take care not to put more strain on your arm than usual. Ask someone to help.
- Take care of your skin by keeping it clean and using moisturiser every day. Avoid getting sunburnt, as this can increase swelling.
- If you have lymphoedema in your leg, do not walk barefoot on a beach or around a swimming pool. This reduces the risk of cuts and possible infection in your foot.
- If you get a cut, scratch or graze on the affected limb, clean it straight away with soap and water. Put on antiseptic cream and cover the affected area.
- Swimming or moving around in water is good for lymphoedema. You do not need to wear a compression garment while swimming because the water creates enough pressure. After swimming, shower and put moisturiser on your skin – sea salt and chlorine make the skin extra dry.
- It may be best to avoid saunas and hot baths in case this increases swelling. Keep the affected area as cool as possible.
- Use an insect repellent spray or cream to protect yourself from insect bites. This should contain up to 50% DEET (diethyl-m-toluamide). DEET is the main ingredient that makes insect repellents work.
- If you are bitten or stung, try not to scratch the affected area. An antihistamine cream or tablets can help ease the itching, pain and swelling.
- If you start to get signs of an infection, tell a doctor straight away. Signs include flu-like symptoms, a high temperature, redness, a rash or heat in the affected area, and increased swelling. If you have antibiotics with you, follow your doctor's advice about taking them.

# If your spleen has been removed

The spleen is an organ that helps the body destroy bacteria and fight infections. If your spleen has been removed (splenectomy) or is not working properly, you have a higher risk of serious infections.

Talk to your doctor if you are planning to travel. They can give you advice and help you plan your trip as safely as possible. This may include:

- giving you a supply of antibiotics and explaining when you may need to take them
- arranging any vaccinations you need.

Malaria can be a life-threatening infection for people without a working spleen. If possible, it is best to avoid travelling to areas where malaria is common. If you have to travel to a country where malaria is common, you must get advice from your specialist doctor. You may need to take extra precautions.

For more information about travelling if your spleen has been removed or does not work properly, visit [travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/89/asplenia-and-hyposplenia](https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/89/asplenia-and-hyposplenia)

While you are away, it is important to contact a doctor straight away if you are ill. If you have insect or animal bites, get treatment urgently. Make sure you know what to do [if you become unwell](#).

GOV.UK has a leaflet and patient warning card that you can carry with you when travelling. Visit [gov.uk/government/publications/splenectomy-leaflet-and-card](https://gov.uk/government/publications/splenectomy-leaflet-and-card)

# If you have a stoma

Having a stoma or opening on your tummy, such as a urostomy, colostomy or an ileostomy, should not stop you from travelling. But you may need to plan your trip more carefully.

## Getting information

Your stoma nurse can give you advice about issues such as:

- your diet and fluid intake while you are travelling
- activities such as swimming
- managing your stoma during long journeys or flights
- how high temperatures can affect the glue used to secure the stoma bags.

There are also [organisations that give information and support to people with a stoma](#).

## Stoma supplies

Make sure you have stoma supplies to last throughout your trip. If you pack about twice the amount of your normal supplies, this helps you be prepared. You may need to change your stoma bag more often than usual, or you may be away for longer than planned. It is especially important to take extra supplies if you are going somewhere hot.

It is a good idea to split your supplies between different items of luggage, in case any get lost. Pack essential supplies in your hand luggage, where you can reach them easily. If you are flying, remember there are rules about carrying scissors and liquids. Always check and follow the advice of the airline you are travelling with.



Some stoma suppliers deliver abroad. Check whether your supplier offers this service before you travel. Store stoma bags in a cool place, away from direct sunlight. Use bottled or boiled water or wet wipes to clean around your stoma.

## **If you have a colostomy or ileostomy**

If you have a colostomy or an ileostomy, it is important to be careful about what you eat the day before you travel.

Avoid spicy foods, fizzy drinks, alcohol and foods that cause wind. If you are travelling on a plane, the changes in air pressure may cause increased wind in the stoma bag. It may help to add an extra flatus filter, which helps wind to escape.

Your GP or stoma nurse can advise you on medicines you can take if you have diarrhoea. These may include anti-diarrhoea medicines and rehydration powders. You can buy these in a pharmacy or supermarket. Or your GP can prescribe them.

If the diarrhoea is severe while you are away or continues for more than 48 hours, it is important to see a doctor.

## Travel certificates

A travel certificate includes details of your medical condition. It can help explain your condition to travel officials, such as airport security staff. The certificate includes your name, address and passport number, and is signed by your doctor.

You can get a stoma travel certificate from:

- IA (Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Association) – visit [iasupport.org](https://iasupport.org)
- Colostomy UK – visit [colostomyuk.org](https://colostomyuk.org)
- Urostomy Association – visit [urostomyassociation.org.uk](https://urostomyassociation.org.uk)
- your stoma care nurse.



# If you have bowel or bladder problems

Sometimes cancer or its treatment can cause bowel or bladder problems that mean you need to find a toilet urgently or more often. Bowel or bladder problems should not stop you from travelling and enjoying your trip, but planning ahead can help.

## Access to toilets

When arranging any type of travel, try to book an aisle seat close to a toilet. This makes it easier for you during the journey. It is also a good idea to have a bag of hand luggage with some supplies inside.

Before your trip, ask if your accommodation has a private bathroom. If you are travelling somewhere unfamiliar, it is a good idea to find out more about the toilet facilities there. They may be different to what you would expect.

If you are going somewhere new, it is a good idea to plan ahead and find out where toilets are before you go. Many areas have lists or maps of the local public toilets. These are often on local authority websites.

You can try:

- typing 'public toilets' and the name of the place you are visiting into a search engine, such as Google
- visiting [toiletmap.org.uk](https://toiletmap.org.uk) to see a map with details of public toilets
- downloading a toilet app for your phone that can help you find a public toilet.

## Get a toilet card

A toilet card is a card you can show quickly and easily to staff in shops, pubs and other places. It explains that you have a medical condition and need urgent access to a toilet. Sometimes it is also called a bladder and bowel card or a 'no waiting' toilet card.

You can order our Macmillan toilet card to carry and use when you are out in public. It also comes with a fob version that can be attached to a keyring. We cannot guarantee that it will work everywhere. But we hope it helps you get access to a toilet without any awkward questions. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/toilet-card](https://macmillan.org.uk/toilet-card)

The Bladder and Bowel Community also offers a free Just Can't Wait toilet card and toilet card app. Visit [bladderandbowel.org/just-cant-wait-card](https://bladderandbowel.org/just-cant-wait-card)

## Use disabled toilets

Disabled toilets often have more privacy and space. The National Key Scheme (NKS) offers access to over 9,000 locked disabled toilets in the UK.

You can buy a key online from places such as [Disability Rights UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/). You can also order a guide that tells you where the toilets are.

## Take supplies with you

You may want to pack a bag of the things you might need when travelling. This could include:

- wet wipes or baby wipes
- barrier cream to protect the skin from damage or infection, such as Cavilon® or Sudocrem®
- pads and extra pants
- antibacterial gel or hand wash
- a change of clothing
- sealable and disposable bags.

If you have bladder problems, you may find it helpful to take a portable urinal with you. This is a light bottle you can pee into if you cannot get to a toilet in time.

Talk to your cancer doctor or nurse for advice on travelling. You can ask them whether any medicines, such as anti-diarrhoea tablets, may be helpful for you.



# If you have a tracheostomy or laryngectomy

Laryngectomy is surgery to remove part or all of the voice box. Having a tracheostomy or laryngectomy should not stop you from travelling.

However, check with your doctor whether it is safe to travel if you have had surgery recently. And ask your doctor or specialist nurse for advice before you travel. This may include information about the following:

- Healthcare during your trip – it is helpful to plan what you will do if you need help while you are away. Find out where the nearest hospital will be and take their contact details with you. Check if they have an ear, nose and throat (ENT) department.
- Supplies and spare equipment – make sure you have everything you might need and think about how to pack. It is a good idea to split your supplies between different items of luggage, in case any get lost. Pack essential supplies in your hand luggage, where you can reach them easily.
- How to look after your stoma or opening in the windpipe – you should look after your stoma as usual. But if you are travelling somewhere warmer or colder, ask your doctor or nurse for advice. Your body may produce thicker or stickier mucus (phlegm) and you may need to take extra care.

## Flying with a breathing stoma

When you breathe through a stoma, air goes straight into your lungs. It is not warmed or moistened by your mouth and nose. The cooler, drier air can irritate your lungs and make you produce more mucus.

The air is very dry on a plane and can make this worse. Here are some tips to look after your airway when flying:

- Drink plenty of water during the flight and avoid having too much alcohol or caffeine, which can make you dehydrated.
- Ask your doctor or nurse how best to look after your stoma when flying. They may advise you to wear a device over the stoma to warm and moisten the air. This is called a heat and moisture exchanger (HME) or a humidification device. Or they can give you advice about using a stoma cover.
- If you use a stoma cover, you can keep it moist with a small mist spray bottle during the flight.

Contact your airline in advance if you need to use oxygen while you are on the plane. Also check their policy on bringing medical equipment.

A nebuliser is a machine that helps you breathe in medicine as a mist through a mask or mouthpiece. This could help you clear your airway, especially in the dry air on a plane. You could ask your healthcare professional if there are options for hiring or borrowing a portable (lightweight) nebuliser.

It is helpful to remind flight attendants that, in an emergency, air should go to your stoma rather than your nose or mouth. You should also explain this to anyone travelling with you. The National Association of Laryngectomy Clubs can send you a free emergency card or wristband – visit [laryngectomy.org.uk/laryngectomy-info/emergency-items](http://laryngectomy.org.uk/laryngectomy-info/emergency-items)





# Further information

About our information	114
Other ways we can help you	116
Other useful organisations	119

# About our information

We provide expert, up-to-date information about cancer. And all our information is free for everyone.

## Order what you need

You may want to order more booklets or leaflets like this one.

Visit [orders.macmillan.org.uk](https://orders.macmillan.org.uk) or call us on [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000).

We have booklets about different cancer types, treatments and side effects. We also have information about work, financial issues, diet, life after cancer treatment and information for carers, family and friends.

## Online information

All our information is also available online at [macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support](https://macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support) You can also find videos featuring stories from people affected by cancer, and information from health and social care professionals.

## Other formats

We also provide information in different languages and formats, including:

- audiobooks
- eBooks
- Braille
- large print
- British Sign Language
- translations.
- easy read booklets

Find out more at [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://macmillan.org.uk/otherformats)

If you would like us to produce information in a different format for you, email us at [informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk) or call us on [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000).

# Other ways we can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we are here to support you.

## Talk to us

If you or someone you know is affected by cancer, talking about how you feel and sharing your concerns can really help.

## Macmillan Support Line

Our support line is made up of specialist teams who can help you with:

- emotional and practical support if you or someone you know has been diagnosed with cancer
- clinical information from our nurses about things like diagnosis and treatments from our nurse specialists
- welfare rights advice, for information about benefits and general money worries.

Our trained cancer information advisers can listen and signpost you to further support. Call us on [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000). We are open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

To contact any of our teams, call the Macmillan Support Line for free on [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000). Or visit [macmillan.org.uk/support-line](https://macmillan.org.uk/support-line) to chat online and see the options and opening times.

You can also email us, or use the Macmillan Chat Service via our website. You can use the chat service to ask our advisers about anything that is worrying you. Tell them what you would like to talk about so they can direct your chat to the right person. Click on the 'Chat to us' button, which appears on pages across the website. Or go to [macmillan.org.uk/talktous](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talktous)

If you would like to talk to someone in a language other than English, we also offer an interpreter service for our Macmillan Support Line. Call [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000) and say, in English, the language you want to use. Or send us a web chat message saying you would like an interpreter. Let us know the language you need and we'll arrange for an interpreter to contact you.

## **Macmillan Information and Support Centres**

Our Information and Support Centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. Visit one to get the information you need and speak with someone face to face. If you would like a private chat, most centres have a room where you can speak with someone confidentially.

Find your nearest centre at [macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) or call us on [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000).

## Help with money worries

Having cancer can bring extra costs such as hospital parking, travel fares and higher heating bills. If you have been affected in this way, we can help. Please note the opening times may vary by service.

### Financial advice

Our expert money advisers on the Macmillan Support Line can help you deal with money worries and recommend other useful organisations that can help.

### Help accessing benefits

You can speak to our money advisers for more information. Call us free on [0808 808 00 00](tel:0808 808 00 00). Visit [macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport](https://macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport) for more information about benefits.

### Macmillan Grants

Macmillan offers one-off payments to people with cancer. A grant can be for anything from heating bills or extra clothing to a much-needed break.

Call us on [0808 808 00 00](tel:0808 808 00 00) to speak to find out more about Macmillan Grants.

## Help with work and cancer

Whether you are an employee, a carer, an employer or are self-employed, we can provide information to help you manage cancer at work. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/work](https://macmillan.org.uk/work)

## Talk to others

No one knows more about the impact cancer can have on your life than those who have been through it themselves. That is why we help bring people together in their communities and online.

### Support groups

Whether you are someone living with cancer or a carer, family member or friend, we can help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face to face with people who understand. Find out about support groups in your area by calling us or by visiting [macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport](https://macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport)

### Online Community

Thousands of people use our Online Community to make friends, blog about their experiences and join groups to meet other people going through the same things. You can access it any time of day or night. Share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://macmillan.org.uk/community)

You can also use our Ask an Expert service on the Online Community to ask any questions you have.

## Macmillan healthcare professionals

Our nurses, doctors and other health and social care professionals give expert care and support to individuals and their families. Call us or ask your GP, consultant, district nurse or hospital ward sister if there are any Macmillan professionals near you.

# Other useful organisations

There are lots of other organisations that can give you information or support. Details correct at time of printing.

## Travel information

### AA

[www.theaa.com/driving-advice](http://www.theaa.com/driving-advice)

Offers information about international driving, including fuel consumption, driving costs and travel insurance.

### Association of British Travel Agents

[www.abta.com](http://www.abta.com)

Provides information about travelling abroad, including tips on accessible travel. Has a checklist to help travel companies understand your needs if you have problems moving around.

### Blue Badge Scheme

[www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge](http://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge)

Information about the UK's Blue Badge scheme that helps people with a disability park closer to their destination.



## **Drug and Firearms Licensing Unit**

Tel **0207 035 6330**

[www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs](http://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs)

The government department that issues personal licences. A personal licence is sometimes needed if you are travelling with certain types of medicines.

## **FIA Guide for the Disabled Traveller**

[www.disabledmotorists.eu](http://www.disabledmotorists.eu)

Provides information on using disability parking permits, placards, or cards around the world.

## **Fit for Travel (Scotland)**

[www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)

Information provided by Public Health Scotland on how to stay safe and healthy when travelling abroad. Gives general travel health and disease prevention advice as well as country-specific information on health risks and vaccine requirements.

## **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

[www.gov.uk/fcdo](http://www.gov.uk/fcdo)

The government department responsible for supporting British citizens abroad. Visit its webpages to find up-to-date foreign travel advice.

## **MoneyHelper**

[www.moneyhelper.org.uk](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk)

Offers impartial guidance about travel insurance. Its website includes a directory of companies that offer travel insurance to people affected by a serious medical condition or disability.

## **RAC**

Tel **0800 072 2822**

[www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk)

Offers driving and mobility-related support, breakdown assistance, insurance coverage and a range of other motoring services.

## **Tourism For All**

[www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)

Provides information about accessible travel for people with disabilities.

## **TravelHealthPro (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)**

[www.travelhealthpro.org.uk](http://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk)

Travel health advice and useful resources for travellers from the UK provided by the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC). Includes links to information about travel health clinic services at the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London.

## **UK Civil Aviation Authority**

[www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk)

The UK's aviation regulator. Offers information for passengers about fitness to fly and travelling with a disability or reduced mobility.

## **Support organisations**

### **Asthma + Lung UK**

Helpline **0300 222 5800**

[www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/travel](http://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/living-with/travel)

Offers advice and support for people with a lung condition.

The 'Travelling with a lung condition' section of the website includes information about insurance, medicine and travelling with oxygen.

### **Bladder and Bowel Community**

[www.bladderandbowel.org](http://www.bladderandbowel.org)

Information and support for people living with a condition that affects the bladder or bowel. Can send you a free toilet access card.

### **Breast Cancer Now**

Tel **0808 800 6000**

[www.breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org)

Information and support for anyone affected by breast cancer. Has information about finding the right clothing and swimwear after breast cancer surgery.

### **Cancer Laryngectomy Trust**

[www.cancerlt.org](http://www.cancerlt.org)

Provides support and understanding for people who are about to have, or have had, a laryngectomy.

### **Colostomy UK**

Helpline **0800 328 4257**

[www.colostomyuk.org](http://www.colostomyuk.org)

Offers support and advice for people living with a stoma. Has a Travel Advice booklet, travel checklist and a travel certificate explaining what a stoma is and what stoma supplies look like.

### **IA (Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Association)**

Tel **0800 018 4724**

[www.iasupport.org](http://www.iasupport.org)

Supports people living with an ileostomy or internal pouch, their family, friends and carers. Has travel tips for people with a stoma and can provide a travel certificate, which can help when going through customs.

### **Lymphoedema Support Network (LSN)**

Tel **0207 351 4480**

[www.lymphoedema.org](http://www.lymphoedema.org)

Provides information and support for people with lymphoedema. Offers factsheets to fee-paying members and sells medical alert cards or bracelets.

### **The National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs (NALC)**

Tel **0207 730 8585**

[www.laryngectomy.org.uk](http://www.laryngectomy.org.uk)

Offers information and support for people who have had a laryngectomy. Publishes a Handbook for Laryngectomy Patients, which includes travel tips. Offers free emergency cards and wristbands.

### **The Urostomy Association**

Tel **0138 643 0140**

[www.urostomyassociation.org.uk](http://www.urostomyassociation.org.uk)

Provides information and support for people who have a urostomy or other urinary diversion. Has information on travel and insurance. Can provide a travel certificate in different languages.

## **Equipment and advice on living with a disability**

### **Disability Rights UK Shop**

Tel **0203 687 0790**

[shop.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://shop.disabilityrightsuk.org)

An online shop selling Radar keys. This gives you access to UK public disabled toilets.

### **The Great British Public Toilet Map**

[www.toiletmap.org.uk](http://www.toiletmap.org.uk)

The UK's largest database of publicly accessible toilets.

### **Hidden Disabilities**

[www.hdsunflower.com/uk](http://www.hdsunflower.com/uk)

Has an online shop selling Hidden Disabilities Sunflower products such as lanyards and cards in several languages.

### **Living Made Easy**

Helpline **0300 123 3084**

[www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk](http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk)

Offers free, impartial advice about all types of disability equipment and mobility products.

## **LGBT-specific support**

### **LGBT Foundation**

Tel **0345 330 3030**

[www.lgbt.foundation](http://www.lgbt.foundation)

Provides a range of services to the LGBT community, including a helpline, website, email advice and counselling.

## Sources

Below is a sample of the sources used in our information about travel and cancer. If you would like more information about the sources we use, please contact us at

**informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk**

GOV.UK. Guidance: Disability and travel abroad. Updated June 2019. Available from [www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-travellers/disability-and-travel-abroad](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-travellers/disability-and-travel-abroad) [accessed January 2023].

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Travel and International Health Team, Public Health Scotland. Fit for Travel. Available from [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk) [accessed January 2023].

## Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up to date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. Some photos are of models.

## Thanks

This booklet has been written, revised and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been approved by members of Macmillan's Centre of Clinical Expertise.

With thanks to: Yolande Borthwick, Physiotherapist, Casley-Smith Lymphoedema Education UK; Jane Chiodini MBE, Travel Health Specialist Nurse; Lesley Dempsey, Macmillan Head and Neck Specialist Nurse; Anna-Marie Duthie, Insight Consultant; Dr Vanessa Field, Deputy Director, National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) and Consultant in Travel Medicine; Mary Gawthrop, Specialist Travel Health Nurse; Pauline McCulloch, Clinical Nurse Specialist; Jacquie Peck, Clinical Nurse Specialist; and Dr Alexandra Taylor, Clinical Oncologist.

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We welcome feedback on our information. If you have any, please contact **[informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk)**

## Can you do something to help?

We hope this booklet has been useful to you. It is just one of our many publications that are available free to anyone affected by cancer. They are produced by our cancer information specialists who, along with our nurses, benefits advisers, campaigners and volunteers, are part of the Macmillan team. When people are facing the toughest fight of their lives, we are here to support them every step of the way.

We want to make sure no one has to go through cancer alone, so we need more people to help us. When the time is right for you, here are some ways in which you can become a part of our team.

### 5 ways you can help someone with cancer

#### 1. Share your cancer experience

Support people living with cancer by telling your story, online, in the media or face to face.

#### 2. Campaign for change

We need your help to make sure everyone gets the right support. Take an action, big or small, for better cancer care.

#### 3. Help someone in your community

A lift to an appointment. Help with the shopping. Or just a cup of tea and a chat. Could you lend a hand?

#### 4. Raise money

Whatever you like doing you can raise money to help. Take part in one of our events or create your own.

#### 5. Give money

Big or small, every penny helps. To make a one-off donation see over.



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Please accept my gift of £  
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I enclose a cheque / postal order /  
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Macmillan Cancer Support

OR debit my:

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Card / Switch / Maestro

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Valid from

Expiry date

Issue no

Security number

Signature

Date / /

## Do not let the taxman keep your money

Do you pay tax? If so, your gift will be worth 25% more to us – at no extra cost to you. All you have to do is tick the box below, and the tax office will give 25p for every pound you give.

I am a UK tax payer and I would like Macmillan Cancer Support to treat all donations I make or have made to Macmillan Cancer Support in the last 4 years as Gift Aid donations, until I notify you otherwise.

I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand Macmillan Cancer Support will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Macmillan Cancer Support and our trading companies would like to hold your details in order to contact you about our fundraising, campaigning and services for people affected by cancer. If you would prefer us not to use your details in this way please tick this box.

In order to carry out our work we may need to pass your details to agents or partners who act on our behalf.

If you would rather donate online go to [macmillan.org.uk/donate](https://macmillan.org.uk/donate)



Please cut out this form and return it in an envelope (no stamp required) to: Supporter Donations, Freepost RUCY-XGCA-XTHU, Macmillan Cancer Support, PO Box 791, York House, York YO1 0NJ

## This booklet is about travelling if you are affected by cancer. It is for anyone planning a trip or holiday in the UK or abroad.

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The booklet talks about how cancer and its treatment may affect your trip. It also tells you about planning ahead, travel insurance, taking medicines abroad and looking after yourself.

At Macmillan, we give people with cancer everything we've got. If you are diagnosed, your worries are our worries. We will help you live life as fully as you can.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call [0808 808 00 00](tel:08088080000) or visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Would you prefer to speak to us in another language? Interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use. Are you deaf or hard of hearing? Call us using NGT (Text Relay) on [18001 0808 808 00 00](tel:1800108088080000), or use the NGT Lite app.

Need information in different languages or formats? We produce information in audio, eBooks, easy read, Braille, large print and translations. To order these, visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call our support line.

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