

Information for patients and carers

Kidney Transplant Patients and Travel

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This leaflet explains precautions for kidney transplant patients who go on holidays.

Evidence-based recommendations on this subject do not exist. Information in this leaflet is based on common sense, experience and anecdotal reports.

Planning your holiday

- We recommend you do not travel out of the region within the first three months after transplantation and stay in the UK within the first year after transplantation. The reason for this is that most problems such as rejection occur during the first year
- Make sure you know where the nearest renal unit is if you travel within the UK. If you don't then the nearest University or Teaching Hospital will be a good address as kidney (renal) departments tend to be sited within larger hospitals
- We do not recommend adventure holidays or travel to countries where high-level transplant aftercare is not available (many parts of Africa and Asia). Please bear in mind that in some other countries (e.g. USA, Russia), you may have to pay for treatment. Please make sure you have appropriate travel insurance, possibly with cover that will bring you back home if required.
- We are very happy to provide guidance if you are not sure whether a holiday destination or type is advisable – please ask during your routine consultation or contact the team at renalpost-transplantteam@lthtr.nhs.uk
- You may require vaccinations to travel to some countries. Please check with your local pharmacy to confirm what you need before you travel. Check any recommendations are ok with the transplant team. You should NEVER HAVE LIVE VACCINES as they can cause severe infections and could be potentially life-threatening
- We suggest you find out about the nearest nephrologist/dialysis centre if you decide to travel abroad. If you can access the

internet check for the nearest university hospital or ask the travel agency/hotel

- Have your usual blood tests (transplant function and levels of immuno-suppressive medication) in good time before you travel. If you require vaccination, please check with us that the vaccination required is safe in transplant patients. Take a copy of your most recent clinic letter with you

During travel to your holiday destination

- Long-distance flights carry a risk for thrombosis (blood clots in your veins). Drink enough fluids, move your legs regularly and ask your doctor whether a single heparin injection before the flight is warranted to prevent thrombosis (for example if you have had a thrombosis previously)
- Make sure that you take plenty of your regular medication with you. You should have extra stock of the immuno-suppressive medication, which may be difficult to obtain abroad. Check the expiry dates on any drugs you intend to take with you and carry them in the original packaging.
- Keep a supply of your medication in your hand luggage (in case your suitcases go missing). If you take your medications or medical devices (e.g. blood sugar machine) in your hand luggage, it is advisable that you bring a letter from the hospital explaining why you need to carry these as well as your medical needs. Always check with your airline if there are any specific restrictions before you travel, this helps to avoid problems with customs/security.

What to do and what to avoid on holiday

- Avoid uncooked food, street vendors, salad, ice cream and raw seafood. Do not drink tap water in less developed countries, use bottled mineral water. Remember ice cubes are usually made from tap water

- Drink enough fluids. Use sun blockers of factor 50 or more. Do not sunbathe and wear a hat in the sun (there is an increased risk of skin cancer)
- Do not hesitate to seek medical attention if you fall ill. Seek immediate attention if you are unable to take your immuno-suppressive medication, e.g. due to nausea and vomiting. Please note that not taking your anti-rejection for any length of time can cause loss of the transplant
- Even with good preparation you may find yourself in a situation where you are ill abroad and you are struggling to access appropriate care for example because you cannot find a local nephrologist. In that situation we recommend you contact the nearest dialysis centre – all common holiday destinations will have such a facility and there will be English-speaking staff due to the fact that they regularly accommodate dialysis patients on holidays. They will know the local healthcare infrastructure and they should be able to advise you regarding where you can be seen by a nephrologist locally
- If you are seriously ill or unwell on holidays please let us know and we can advise you and also local health care providers renalpost-transplantteam@lthtr.nhs.uk
- One of the great advantages of having a functioning transplant is being able to travel, please enjoy your holidays

Disclaimer:

This leaflet was compiled on the basis of personal, institutional and published experience. Other recommendations may apply to individual patients.

The contents of this leaflet do not replace a consultation with the transplant team/nephrologists.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Kidney Transplant Team, telephone **01772 523475** (answer machine).

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

www.kidney.org.uk

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**.

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

patientexperienceandinvolve@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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