

Enjoy Your Journey

Travel Tips for Seniors

By Lois G. Tager, M. Ed., CSA



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The holiday season is fast approaching. Preparing for travel with a senior will save many anxious hours before and during your trip and allow you to enjoy your journey.

Be sure to confirm your flights at least hours

72

prior to your departure.

Airline travel preparedness will save you many moments of anxiety and exhaustion. Be sure to confirm your flights at least 72 hours prior to your departure. If you do not, and there is a change of departure time and you miss your flight, you may not be reimbursed for the missed flight.

Make copies of your itinerary and give one to someone you trust and who needs to know where you are staying, one for your suitcase and one for you to carry. Anyone with a medical condition should have a list of medications and the names and telephone numbers of your

physicians in the event of a medical problem. This will also allow for a quick replacement if medications are lost.

If you are traveling with a senior who does not have proper identification such as a passport or license, an ID card can be obtained at the local DMV. To go through security, one must have a valid state or federal issued ID. Out of date passports and driver's licenses are not accepted by the government which handles security.

If you need a wheelchair, ask the baggage handler when you check-in at curbside. One will be provided along with an attendant to help you to the gate. If a restroom is needed, the attendant will wait until you return to the wheelchair.

If it is necessary to carry oxygen onto the plane, obtain a "Physician Consent Form for Individual Who Needs to Use a Portable Oxygen Concentrator During a Flight." The form must have the heading of the physician writing the consent form. The form may be obtained on most airline websites under "Travel Tools or Policies."

Staying healthy while traveling is a challenge but there are few steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved one against airborne germs and other in-flight hazards. Bring along disinfectant wipes for the arms and tray tables.

- **Combat dehydration** – Dry air and low humidity on planes dehydrates your body which can cause excessive fatigue and jet lag and irritate upper respiratory passages, making them more susceptible to infection. Drink at least eight ounces of water per hour in-flight. Contact-lens wearers should be sure to take eye drops because dehydration reduces tear volume.
- **Keep your legs happy** – Both pressure changes and cramped seats cause feet and ankles to swell. Don't wear new or tight shoes or cross your legs. Take hourly walks through the cabin. Take off your shoes and elevate your feet if possible.
- **Avoid hunger** – Bring along nutritious snacks. If you are traveling with a diabetic, be sure to have appropriate foods available on long flights.

If you are traveling with a loved one who suffers from dementia, be sure not to leave your loved one alone – at any time. People with dementia often cannot follow directions and can get lost when left on their own even for a few minutes.

Contact your credit card companies to let them know where and for how long you will be traveling, especially if you are going abroad and plan to use your ATM card. American banks may freeze your credit/debit cards in certain countries to protect against fraud.

Do not over pack! Take only what is needed. Be sure to check the weather in your destination city so you will have the correct clothing. Leave expensive jewelry at home if you are traveling overseas. Traveling light is traveling smart!

The holidays represent a busy time for the airlines. Arrive early at the airport well prepared and patient. Have a great trip!

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