

# PARKINSON'S TRAVEL CHECKLIST

For the average person, traveling is a minor frustration. Security lines, delays, crowded airports and cramped and long lines at snack shops and restaurants are par for the course. However, if you're living with Parkinson's, those things aren't just frustrations, they can be so troublesome and aggravating to deal with that you choose to stay at home.


That's why we decided to reach out to our Davis Phinney Foundation Ambassadors, many of whom are avid travelers, to get their best tips for traveling with Parkinson's.

## Planning

- Travel by train rather than plane when possible. Trains have more leg room and no TSA.
- Allow time for transfers when purchasing tickets. Changing planes or trains takes longer than you expect.
- Travel when you're at your best. For example, travel in the morning if that's when your medications offer the most symptom relief.
- Make packing lists and save them. You might have different lists for road trips, weekend getaways and international trips. Update your lists each time you travel.
- Pack early but check the weather right before you leave in case you need to adjust what you bring.
- Put all paperwork in an easy-access location. Consider including an emergency contact list with information about your medical providers and caregivers.
- Arrive at the airport early.

## Medication Management

- Bring more than you need and know how to get more in a pinch.
- Store your medications in more than one location, including carry-on bags or on you if possible. Ask a travel partner to carry an extra dose.
- Set timers or alarms that remind you to take them on schedule.
- Plan a consistent schedule for taking your medication. For example, if you're going through multiple time zones, take your meds every four hours rather than at 1:00 and 5:00.
- Always carry a list of your medications with you and be ready to show them if asked. Be sure at least one set of your prescriptions are in Rx bottles with labels.

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- Get a letter from your doctor for liquid medications. TSA allows liquid medications above 3oz, but only with clear documentation. Keep these in your carry-on; not checked luggage.

### **Getting Around**

- Carry a cane or walking stick, even if you think you don't need it. Stress often makes Parkinson's symptoms worse, and travel is stressful.
- Arrange for a wheelchair to get through the airport, which helps in crowds and unfamiliar places.
- Ask for help if you need it. If help is offered, take it. This includes having someone carry your bags, taking advantage of extra time allowed for boarding, having someone get food for you, etc.
- Take a disposable plastic grocery bag with you so you can sit on it on the plane. Plastic reduces friction which makes it much easier to get out of your chair.
- Practice getting in and out of your airplane seat (or any seat) before you go.


### **Communication**

- Communicate clearly and frequently. "Nobody can read our cue cards so it's our job to let them know what's up." —Kathleen Kiddo
- Consider wearing or traveling with a card that says, "I've got Parkinson's and I need a bit more time and space. Thank you."

### **Clothes**

- Pack light. You can usually find anything you forgot at your destination.
- Travel in comfortable clothing that's easy to get on and off in bathrooms.
- Wear knee-high compression socks for car and air travel to promote blood flow and reduce swelling.
- Bring a change of clothes in your carry-on bag.

### **Sleep and Rest**

- Slow down and avoid overscheduling. Prioritize activities that are most important and conserve energy so you have it when it matters most.
  - Time your travel so you can rest when you arrive at your destination. For travel with significant time change, take a 1-2 hour nap upon arrival. Assimilate into the routine of the time zone as soon as possible.
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- Bring a sleep mask and earplugs, and maybe an inflatable neck pillow for additional comfort.
- Let your travel companion(s) know when you're too tired to do certain activities. Rest is important.

### **Food & Drink**

- Keep food items at the ready to separate them at security.
- Fill your water bottle after security and between flights.
- Bring more snacks than you think you'll need on the plane in case of delay.

### **Exercise**

- Stand up to stretch every 30-45 minutes while in transport.
- Consider bringing a jump rope for simple, light, portable, aerobic exercise.
- Continue practicing the activities that make you feel well whenever possible. Maintaining routine is important during vacation and for when you return home.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Label loose objects with your name and cell number.
- Get a handicap placard.
- Check out the local Parkinson's offerings wherever you're travelling. If they don't have new skills to offer you, maybe you have skills to offer them.
- If you have DBS, bring the device wallet card from Medtronic (or alternate company). Security may ask for it. Tell them it's a "medical device" or say you have a pacemaker rather than explaining DBS. You can't go through the old-style security check machines or let them use wands to check you. Be prepared for a pat down.
- Travel with people who know you and can help with the unpredictability of Parkinson's.
- Maintain a sense of humor. Travel is difficult, but you'll get where you need to go eventually. "If you like to travel, then it's part of your living fully with Parkinson's."  
—Jill Ater