

Traveling with PD



The difficulties of Parkinson's disease don't have to interfere with traveling, which should be an enjoyable experience and not limited or avoided because of the disease. But planning ahead is key to avoid these difficulties. The following guidelines should help to make your next trip anxiety-free.

Tips of Traveling With PD

- Always try to travel with a companion.
- Place the names of your doctor, insurance company, emergency contact, and medications in your wallet or purse.
- Carry identification stating that you have PD.
- Use a fanny pack or backpack so that you have both hands free to balance as you walk, especially if walking any distance.
- Pack snacks and carry a water bottle to take medications.
- Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing and good walking shoes.
- Try to stick to your routine from home. Including taking medicine at the same time and exercising a similar amount.
- See fewer sites...enjoy them more!
- Give yourself extra time for everything.
- Speak up and let others know what you need. Most people are happy to help.
- When choosing resorts on a Caribbean island, look for a facility that provides golf carts to drive between your room and the beach or restaurants if walking long distances is difficult for you.

Research Your Trip

- You need to know where you are going and what kinds of resources are available to you once you get there.
- Take into consideration your diagnosis and the restrictions associated with it.
- Take advantage of what is available.
- Once you have decided where you are going, educate yourself about the location of the nearest hospital and pharmacy. If you are traveling outside the country, make sure you know the limitations of the local healthcare system and what your health insurance plan will and will not cover. You may also consider additional health insurance.
- Plan activities that match your physical ability. Safety should always be at the forefront of your mind when planning how you are going to spend your free time. For certain outdoor pursuits, consider informing a guide or activity leader of any concessions you may need.

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Planning Ahead

- Use a travel agent. Explain that you have PD. Don't assume that they understand your challenges. Advise them on the specific challenges and ask them to make arrangements accordingly. Ask for their input about places that you plan on traveling to and ask for their input.
- When making hotel reservations, request a room on the ground floor or near an elevator. Ask if they have rooms that are "accessible"; these usually include grab bars in the shower and bathroom and have wider spaces between furniture, providing you with more space for walking and turning around.
- If you are sightseeing, make sure you inquire about specific accommodations. For instance, accessibility for mobile aids.
- Ask your neurologist if they can give you the name of a doctor in the area to which you are traveling.
- Find out if there is a Parkinson's Support Group in the area you are visiting.

Packing

- Efficient packing can make a big difference, so be sure to make a check list of the essentials beforehand – passport, tickets, money and special items.
- Sort out your outfits complete with socks, undergarments and shoes,
- Include PD friendly clothing & accessories, such as wrinkle-free items with elastic waistbands, pull-overs or closures other than buttons for ease in dressing.
- Toiletries are easier to handle if you have a compartment-type bag. Bags that can hang on the back of a door are convenient, providing easy access to each compartment.
- Take needed assistive equipment (such as a walker), and always take a cane or walking stick, making certain that your name is well displayed on each item.

Traveling With PD Medications

- Always have at least a day's dosage of medication in your pocket or purse.
- Try to carry all of your medications with you, in the event that your luggage gets misplaced.
- Pack enough medications to last the entire trip plus extra in case of delays or lost.
- Insure that all medications are properly labelled.
- Do not rely on out-of-town, or especially out-of-the-country, pharmacies for refills.
- Check with your doctor about any over-the-counter drugs, such as those for motion sickness or diarrhea, before you leave.
- Find out if any of your medications are "sun-sensitive" and plan accordingly.
- Carry a list and schedule of medications with you.
- If possible, use a watch with an alarm or an alarm pillbox. If you are traveling with time changes it may be difficult for you to remember on your own.
- When travelling to humid climates, be sure to protect your medications from the humidity to prevent pills from dissolving. Use rice or silica gel packs in the containers.

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Types of Travel

Travel by Car

- Many PD medications can cause drowsiness, particularly after eating. If you driving, take a nap before you go and avoid eating for two to three hours before departing.
- Do not overestimate your abilities. While you may be capable of driving short distances to and from home, a longer road trip may require much more stamina. Either break the trip up into shorter distances with frequent stops, or share the driving with someone else.

Travel by Train

- When booking your ticket, let them know that you will require assistance. Ask if they have priority boarding and if there will be a person available to assist you.
- Often, when traveling with a companion, the companion travels free. Ask if this is a service that they provide.
- Choose an aisle seat close to the washroom. Ideally, a PWP should not sit inactive for more than 20-30 minutes at a time, so move your legs, stretch regularly and walk around when possible.
- Ask for a wheelchair if you have a short turnaround on connecting trains.
- Try to add a rest day for your trip, and schedule long layovers when possible. Take stretch breaks and exercise breaks when you can.
- Keep your medication in your carry-on in case you are separated by your luggage.
- Pack comfort items. Even if you don't normally use a cane, walker or wheelchair, consider bringing or using one if it's convenient.



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Travel by Plane

- When booking your ticket, let them know that you will require assistance. Airlines must provide assistance. Most will go out of their way to accommodate customers.
- Choose an aisle seat close to the washroom. Ideally, a PWP should not sit inactive for more than 20-30 minutes at a time, so move your legs, stretch regularly and walk around when possible.
- Ask for a wheelchair if you have a short turnaround on connecting flights.
- Try to add a rest day for your trip, and schedule long layovers when possible. Take stretch breaks and exercise breaks when you can.
- Keep your medication in your carry-on in case you are separated by your luggage.
- Pack comfort items. Even if you don't normally use a cane, walker or wheelchair, consider bringing or using one if it's convenient.
- Prepare for Airport Security. Keep your medicine in a separate bag so it's easy to pull out if necessary.
- Ask for a wheelchair at the airport – whether you need one or not. Being in a wheelchair helps put you on the fast track in an airport, which can help cut down on stress.
- The limit of one carry-on bag and one personal bag (purse) per traveler may not apply to medical supplies and/or devices. Ask your airline.
- Drink plenty of fluids during your flight, so that you do not become dehydrated.
- If you are traveling alone, inquire about a gate pass which will allow a family member or caregiver to accompany you through security.
- Consider compression stockings to manage circulation in your legs during long flights.
- Let the flight attendant know if you need assistance with your food, such as cutting it up.

Travel by Bus

- Greyhound buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts.
- Greyhound provides assistance with boarding, de-boarding, luggage, transfers, stowing and retrieving mobility equipment.
- Greyhound allows a personal attendant to travel one-way at no charge. (Arrangements for a return ticket are made at the returning location.)

Travel on a Cruise Ship

- Ocean liners offer scooters for rent during cruises.
- Determine in advance whether any ports of call require a license for a motorized wheelchair.
- There are a number of Parkinson's Education Cruises online. These are designed for PWP's and caregivers. Many leave from Florida. Check them out.
- Ask about handicapped accessible cabins which are usually larger.

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Enjoy!

Now that you have planned everything in advance, enjoy your well-deserved trip. Make sure your sightseeing schedule is flexible and build in mini-rests and one nap every day. When traveling for long periods of time, stop frequently to stretch or walk around, as well as for bathroom breaks. Traveling does not have to end when Parkinson's advances. Enjoy yourself!

Helpful Links

- Canadian Transportation Agency
 - <http://www.otc-cta.gc.ca/eng/take-charge#chapter8>

Local Travel Agencies

Uxbridge

- Uxbridge Travel Centre
 - <http://www.travelplus.ca/>
 - 905-852-6163
- Getaway Travel
 - 905-852-6171

Port Perry

- Marigold Travel
 - <http://marigoldtravel.ca/>
 - 905-985-7878
- Marlin Travel
 - <http://www.marlintravel.ca/>
 - 905-985-2268

Stouffville

- Travel Point
 - <http://www.travelpoint.ca/>
 - 905-591-7881
- Stonehouse Travel
 - <http://stonehousetravel.com/>
 - 905-640-5491

