

WEBINAR: I am ready to travel but is it safe for me with PAH?

Episode 11 – Wednesday 26 February 2020

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Overview

On Wednesday 26 February 2020, Actelion hosted a webinar entitled '**I am ready to travel but is it safe for me with PAH?**'. Trishna Bharadia, Health Advocate and Patient Engagement Consultant from the United Kingdom (UK) was the guest speaker. Trishna discussed important considerations when travelling with a chronic condition such as Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (PAH). These included choosing the right destination, managing medication whilst travelling, considering the method of transport and having an emergency plan.

The primary objectives of the webinar were:

- To discuss and recognize the impact of PAH on a person's ability to travel
- To share best practice approaches on how to manage travelling, whilst living with a chronic condition like PAH, with a focus on planning and preparation and support from health teams
- To identify sources of quality patient information and provide practical guidance about traveling while living with a chronic condition like PAH

Discussion summary and key learnings

Choosing the right destination

- Consider the factors which can make one destination more favorable to visit than another when living with a chronic condition like PAH. This could include:
 - Calculating the distance from home. Generally, the longer the travel time, the more challenging it can be (e.g. some people with PAH have to use a breathing device on a regular basis, which requires charging points and would therefore limit the time that could be spent travelling by air)
 - Researching the healthcare facilities available in your chosen location. Ensure there are adequate resources nearby and if possible discuss this with your healthcare professional. They may have knowledge about healthcare in different countries and be able to inform you of things to look out for
 - Considering factors like the altitude and climate of your destination. Many people with PAH may find it difficult to be at a high altitude and in an extreme climate. Consult your healthcare professional about this. Also, consider how changes in temperature may affect medication. Often medication has to be kept at stable temperatures or refrigerated
 - Remembering that in some countries there may be a language barrier that can make communication difficult. Consider downloading an app to help with translation and ensure you can communicate with locals if you needed to

Managing medication whilst travelling

- When travelling there are multiple factors around medication which need to be considered. Speak to your healthcare professional to involve them in your plans early on
 - Ask your medical team for a letter explaining your condition, medications and emergency contact details for your healthcare team, in case you were to become unwell whilst travelling
 - Discuss the need for any vaccinations and whether these are suitable for you
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- Check with your doctor whether changing time zones will affect when you need to take your medications
- Some countries have regulations and restrictions on certain drugs. Research this before you go and discuss with your healthcare professional if there is an alternative medication that would work for you
- If you require oxygen, there may be additional factors to consider. Discuss this with your healthcare team. Sometimes people that don't require supplemental oxygen day to day may require some when flying or travelling
- Order medication in advance to cover the duration of your trip, including extra for contingency. Remember to order enough to last until you are able to obtain more once you return home
- Remember to order and pack any necessary accessories e.g. cool packs, storage containers and pumps
- Always keep your medication with you and in your hand luggage when flying, to minimize the risk of loss and damage
- Locate somewhere near your destination where you could obtain more medication if you needed to

Considering the method of transport

- Regardless of your mode of travel, there are many similar aspects to consider, these include:
 - Contacting the travel agent to see if you can book additional luggage for free, as medication and health supplies can take up a lot of suitcase space
 - Asking a companion to travel with you who can help to carry bags and support with navigation. Feel comfortable to ask your companion for support
 - Familiarizing yourself with the layout of an airport or train station before you go. A good way to do this is to join social media networks e.g. Facebook groups and ask if anyone has experience of travelling through the terminal before
 - Reserving your seat in advance and choosing an aisle seat so that you can stand up and walk around on long journeys
 - Remembering to try and move around every two hours to increase blood flow and reduce the risk of blood clots
 - Booking assistance, which can include a wheelchair or buggy use for example. This is advantageous in large airports to prevent walking long distances. Other benefits can include early boarding which can also prevent standing for long periods
- Check with individual tour operators about specific requirements you may have

Emergency plan – what to prepare ahead of travelling

- It is always a good idea to create an emergency pack of information before travelling that you can keep in your travel bag and update before each trip. This should include the following: travel dates, booking references, contact details, accommodation details, itinerary, healthcare team and insurance contacts
- Additional useful items of information to consider includes a letter from your healthcare team and a list of your medications (including doses and timings)
- It is a good idea to create another information pack for someone at home along with the one you will take when travelling

Conclusion

- Travel with a chronic condition is possible for most people with sufficient planning and preparation
 - Always contact your healthcare professional early on in the planning process for advice before travelling
 - Remember to leave enough time to plan and prepare for your trip. Many factors e.g. obtaining vaccines, ordering larger quantities of medication and arranging insurance may take weeks or months to set up
 - Ensure you enjoy your travels. Try to relax and not stress about travelling, associated anxiety typically reduces the more you travel
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Appendix

For more information about travelling with PAH visit: <https://phassociation.org/patients/living-with-ph/traveling-with-ph/> or <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/travelling-with-medicines>

For information specifically about travelling with supplemental oxygen visit: <https://www.verywellhealth.com/traveling-with-oxygen-1132032> <https://www.1stclassmed.com/blog/24-travel-tips-every-oxygen-patient-needs-to-know> <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/going-on-holiday/holidaying-with-oxygen>

For specific advice to you, visit your healthcare professional and discuss your travel plans

