



# Traveling with PI

Having a primary immunodeficiency (PI) need not limit your ability to travel, but it does call for extra precautions and patient-specific travel aids.

By Trudie Mitschang



**TRAVEL IS STRESSFUL** and often unpredictable. For PI patients, stress levels can be even higher, since oftentimes travel comes with health threats unique to the immune-compromised community. The good news is, with proper planning, you can avoid airborne illnesses and safely enjoy your time away, even during the hectic and often infectious holiday travel season.

## Planning Ahead

In addition to all the normal parts of planning for a trip, you'll want to take time to prepare in advance for everything impacted by your PI. Abbie Cornett, *IG Living* magazine's patient advocate, suggests patients consider their infusion schedules when booking vacation dates and, if possible, schedule their infusion just before leaving and immediately upon return. "I always plan infusions around travel dates, but for an extended trip, you need to find an infusion center or doctor in the area where you are visiting," says Cornett, who is also a common variable immune deficiency patient.

Cindi Berry, RN, BSN, IgCN, clinical educator for NuFACTOR Specialty Pharmacy, offers these additional travel tips:

- Always have an emergency contact available locally in the area you are visiting.
- Make sure you know the location of the closest hospital and emergency room.
- Have a medical identification card/jewelry on hand in case of an emergency.
- Always contact your specialty pharmacy when traveling to keep them informed. It may need additional orders from your prescribing MD if you are traveling to a different state.

## Tips for Air Travel

When packing for a plane trip, it's a good idea to place medication and supplies in your carry-on or in a bag designated for medication so that you can easily access it. This also eliminates the risk that needed medications could be lost with checked luggage. Prior to your trip, be sure to ask your immunologist if you should bring antibiotics or other medications in case you become ill. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) allows medications past airport checkpoints once they have been screened; just be sure to keep your medications in their original containers. Also, your healthcare provider should write a letter of necessity for medications such as immune globulin and infusion supplies. TSA offers a notification card that can be used by travelers with disabilities or medical conditions, but the card does not replace a letter of necessity written by your physician. Your medical supplies are also protected from many of the airport security rules; for example, medications may be carried onto the plane in quantities greater than the 3.4-fluid-ounce limit required for other liquids. You can learn more about travel with medications from the TSA website at [www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/what-expect-if-passenger-needs-medication](http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/what-expect-if-passenger-needs-medication). ■



### Make Prescriptions Portable

The SafeTote Rx portable medication storage container holds up to eight standard prescription bottles, keeping them organized, safe and secure. The locking zipper bag is constructed with a durable, scratch-resistant, leather-like acrylic polyurethane vinyl outer material with protective Oxford Terylene interior lining to safeguard your medicine. It comes with an optional TSA lock with universal key for airport security inspection. \$14.99 with free standard shipping at [www.safetoterx.com](http://www.safetoterx.com)



### Kill Germs Naturally

Clean Well hand sanitizers kill germs with a patented formulation of thyme. This all-natural formula lets you say goodbye to germs naturally in an alcohol and Triclosan-free formula that is non-toxic and safe for kids. Made from rapidly renewable botanical sources, Clean Well products are certified cruelty-free. They are available in several sizes; for travel, consider the Pocket Wipes pack (80 count total). \$26.99 at [www.cleanwelltoday.com](http://www.cleanwelltoday.com)



## useful gear for packing your bags



### Breathe Easy

Sometimes it's best to use a protective face mask when traveling by air. A decorative design can make this necessary precaution easier for small travelers. The Breathe Healthy Face Mask for kids contains an antimicrobial germ-killing agent and filters air down to 1.0 micron to help to protect against most types of dust, pollen, mold spores, pet hair and dander, various bacterial allergens, and cold and flu germs. It is washable and reusable in over a dozen prints. \$14 with free shipping on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



### Catch Your Flight, Not an Infection

Kleen Getaway Air Travel Pack contains everything you need to keep infections at bay during air travel. Developed in response to television stories like "How Dirty is Your Plane" (CBS) and "Flying the Filthy Skies" (NBC), this travel-ready pack contains travel essentials to disinfect and sanitize personal seating areas on commercial jets, plus travel size must-haves like aspirin, bandages and stain remover. The pack is TSA-compatible. \$12.95 plus shipping on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



### Keep Your Cool

Most subcutaneous immune globulin products do not require refrigeration. To be safe, it may still be a good idea to store product bottles in a cooler or insulated container in case of unexpected temperature changes such as when items are left in a hot car. The PackIt insulated bag is free of harmful PVC, BPA, phthalates and lead, and is made with nontoxic materials. \$19.99 at [www.packit.com](http://www.packit.com)