

# Travel with Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension

Travel can be easier when you plan ahead. Here are some tips to help.



# Destination relaxation

## **With checklist in hand, take some of the stress out of traveling with PAH**

It may feel overwhelming to travel when you have pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH). There will always be things you can't control like long lines, the weather, travel delays or crowds. Your daily routine might look and feel different.

- People who don't need oxygen at home might need it when they fly or travel to higher altitudes.
- Your doctor may want to do an oxygen stress test to see how your body will respond to being on a plane or at altitude.
- Taking your medications can be complicated. Some medications need cool storage, extra supplies, or a pump or inhaler.

But the challenges don't have to stop you. Planning ahead can make a difference. Here are some tips that can help make your trip as smooth and stress-free as possible.



## First, talk to your doctor

First, talk to your doctor to make sure you can travel. Tell your doctor:

- How you'll be traveling (like by car, train, cruise ship or plane) and how long the trip will take.
- The altitude of the place you are going.
- How long you will be gone.

Ask for original, handwritten copies of your prescriptions. You might need them when you go through security or if you have an emergency and need more medications.

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Ask for an original, handwritten copy of your oxygen orders. Talk to your doctor about how many liters of oxygen flow you need during your travel.

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Ask your doctor if it will be safe for you to disconnect your oxygen when you go through airport security. You are the only person who can disconnect your oxygen before you go through x-ray scanning and the only one who can reconnect it after you are screened. Make sure you know how to disconnect and reconnect.

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If your oxygen can't be disconnected, get a written order from your doctor. This order has to say that you know how to use the oxygen on your own and you know what to do if an alarm or warning goes off.

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Talk to your doctor about healthy eating while you travel.

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Make sure you have a medical release from the doctor if you need it or any other medical forms.

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## **Manage your medication, energy and oxygen needs**

- Bring original, handwritten copies of your prescriptions.
- If you are on infused or inhaled medications, bring a copy of the CVS Specialty® information sheet. (It's in your CVS Specialty patient guide.)
- Take at least an extra week of medications and supplies in your carry-on luggage. Be sure to carry your medications and paperwork where you can reach them easily, like in a backpack, purse or briefcase.

- Take your specialty pharmacy phone number. You may need to call them about any medication or pump/device issues.
- Take your PAH CareTeam contact information.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet or something else that lets others know you have PAH.
- Call ahead for wheelchair service. This will help save energy and make it easier to get through the crowds.
- Pick an aisle seat. It makes it easier to get up and stretch your legs.
- Wear support or compression stockings. This can help with swelling and comfort, especially when you are at high altitudes.
- Limit how much salt you eat before, during and after your trip.
- Always have a snack or two handy.
- Bring a pulse oximeter with you so you can test your oxygen level when needed.
- Make sure you have enough oxygen for the entire length of your trip, plus extra in case you get delayed.
- Give yourself enough time and rest whenever you need to.

## **Ground travel**

- Stop often along the way if you are driving. Stand up and stretch your legs if you are going by train or bus. You lessen the risk of blood clots if you get up and move around at least every two hours.
- Make sure you have plans in case you have an emergency along the way or when you get to where you are going.

Think about things like:

- Contact info for a local PAH specialist or nearby hospitals. You can find a PAH specialist at: <https://phassociation.org/patients/doctorswhotreatph/>
- The name and number of a local oxygen supplier.

## Traveling on a cruise

- Call the cruise line to learn what their rules are and what medical forms you need if you are traveling with oxygen.
- Verify what medical services are available on board and at ports of call.
- Ask the cruise line if they supply the oxygen or if you need to plan for oxygen yourself.
- Call your oxygen supplier. Let them know:
  - The name of the cruise line
  - The port you are leaving from
  - How long you will be gone
- Request that your oxygen supplier will give you a nighttime home concentrator for your cabin and a portable oxygen concentrator (POC) – or enough tanks to last the entire cruise, round-trip.
- Bring a copy of your oxygen prescription and a medical release from your doctor.
- Get to your departure point early. It can take extra time to get through security.
- Find places around the ship where you can plug in your POC.
- Bring enough oxygen and extra batteries. Keep enough batteries charged so you are ready to participate in ship and shore activities.



## Air travel

### Before take-off

- Always pack your medicine and supplies in your carry-on luggage. It doesn't happen often, but checked bags may get lost or delayed.
- Get a non-stop flight if you can. If you can't, schedule as few stops as possible.
- Call the airline to find out what their rules are for traveling with oxygen or using a POC.
- Bring extra oxygen if your air travel includes layovers or connections. Plan for delays.

### Check-in and security checks

- Plan for an oxygen supplier or personal attendant to go with you to the gate. (They will need their own gate pass or boarding pass.)
- Check to see if there are places to plug in your POC at each airport so you can recharge the batteries.
- Always bring extra batteries. Spare lithium batteries need to be in their original packaging and go in your carry-on. If you don't have the original packaging, the



battery terminals need to be taped or the batteries need to be put in separate plastic bags or protective pouches.

- Pack your continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine in your carry-on bag (with no more than 3 ounces of distilled water) in case you need to show it to security. You can pack larger amounts of distilled water in checked bags.
- Put all liquids (3 ounces or less) in a quart-sized plastic bag. Medically necessary liquids in larger volume may require extra approval and screening.
- Pack a separate container of distilled water (3 ounces or less) in your carry-on for aerosolized therapies.
- Keep all medications and medical forms, original prescriptions and other paperwork somewhere you can get to them easily, in case someone needs to look at them.
- Some states want you to make sure all medications are labeled and in their original containers.



## For more information:

- Visit Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website: <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures>
- Visit TSA Cares: <https://www.tsa.gov/contact-center/form/cares>
- Call **1-855-787-2227**

## Oxygen in flight

- Find out if you have to use the airline's oxygen supplier or if you should make your own arrangements.
- If you are using your own POC, double check with the airline that the flow is okay to use on the plane.
- All POCs have to be approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). To check if your POC is approved:
  - Look for a label on your POC
  - Visit the FAA website: [www.faa.gov/about/initiatives/cabin\\_safety/portable\\_oxygen/](http://www.faa.gov/about/initiatives/cabin_safety/portable_oxygen/)
  - Call the FAA at **1-866-835-5322**
- Many airlines let you rent or buy a POC for travel. Before renting or buying, check to make sure the POC is FAA-approved for in-flight use.
- Don't forget to check if your insurance will cover the cost of extra oxygen if needed when traveling.
- For additional information, you can visit <https://travelwithoxygen.com/>

This article is intended as a general-purpose summary and includes supplemental information from FAA guidelines, airline company websites, and websites of organizations such as the American Heart Association and the Pulmonary Hypertension Association. Please review original source material and the website for your airline for most up to date information.

# Keep calm, carry on



## Worried about exposing your PAH medication to security x-rays?

**You can ask for a visual inspection of your carry-on bags.**

All carry-on luggage that goes through airport security must be scanned by x-ray. Unfortunately, little is known about the effects of x-ray exposure on PAH medications.

The manufacturers of Remodulin, Tyvaso, Ventavis and Flolan state that the stability of their PAH medications have not been tested after being exposed to x-rays, so they don't make any specific recommendations.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of sending your medications and supplies through x-ray, you can ask for a visual inspection. Have your medications and supplies in a separate bag when you get to the TSA officer at the walk-through metal detector and ask the officer to visually inspect them instead.



The TSA officer will ask you to show, handle and repack your own medication and supplies. Any medication and/or supplies that the TSA officer can't see during the inspection has to be x-rayed.<sup>2</sup> To make the security screening easier, you can bring a letter from your doctor listing your medical needs.

If you prefer a visual inspection of your medication, be sure to leave yourself plenty of time to pass through security so that you can get to your gate on time.



Visit **CVSSpecialty.com/PAH** or call our PAH CareTeam at **1-87-PAHCARE (1-877-242-2738)**.

1. Information provided by manufacturers.

2. <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures>. Accessed October 26, 2022.



For more information, please call the PAH Care Program at 1-87-PAHCARE-8 (1-877-242-2738)

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