

Health and wellness tips for safe travel

Summer is a common time for vacation. Whether it is a weekend getaway to the coast or an overseas trip, going on vacation can be a wonderful experience when well planned. Many of us are dependent on our medications for various conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Including your medications in your vacation plans will save you time and money, and help keep you safe and healthy while away from home. It is especially important to plan ahead if you have a chronic medical condition or a complex medication regimen. Effectively managing your medications and preparing a travel health kit will help you avoid a medication mishap while on vacation.

Make sure you have an ample supply of medication to last the entire trip and that you have refills for each of them. Prescriptions can usually be transferred and filled in other states if needed; however, each state has different rules and laws. Always check with a pharmacy in your destination state if you have questions. Preparing a travel health kit is a great way to ensure that you will have all your health needs covered while on vacation.

Your kit should include an updated medical history with information such as prescriber contact information, health conditions, allergies, current prescriptions and insurance information. Helpful items to include are antidiarrhea medications, pain relievers, insect repellent, sunscreen, antibiotic ointment and a sanitizing hand gel.

Once you ensure that you have all the medication you will need while traveling, make sure it is well-protected from the elements. Excessive exposure to sunlight, moisture and high temperatures can alter your medications. A good rule of thumb is to keep medications in the same container they arrived in from the pharmacy. Another way to protect your medication is to place all your prescription vials in a sealable zip-lock bag to keep fluids and moisture out.

If you are traveling abroad, ask your doctor whether any vaccinations are needed to protect yourself against infections common in the area. Medication names and strengths can differ from country to country. Make sure you bring enough of your own medicine to last throughout your vacation.

Travelers should check with the United States embassy or consulate in the country they are visiting for important travelers' information about current health topics, advice on foods to avoid and even health-related warnings. Also consider purchasing additional travel health insurance that protects you when traveling abroad.

Last, make an appointment with your physician — get a health checkup and get answers to all your health-related questions before you leave.

Several online resources provide good travel health information. Take time to review these before you leave:

- www.travelhealth.com
- www.cdc.gov/travel
- www.travmed.com

Talking with your doctor: Be prepared for your next visit

It can be a little hard to remember everything you want to talk about once you're at the doctor's office. Read the following tips to help prepare for your appointment and talking to your doctor.

Preparation

It is important to come to your appointment prepared to talk about your health. It is easy to forget what you want to ask during your visit, so write down your questions and concerns in advance. Remember to take these notes with you to the doctor. Bring a family member or friend to help you remember and feel more comfortable.

Here are some more ideas to help you prepare:

- If you use glasses, remember to take them to the doctor's visit. If you have a hearing aid, make sure it is working well and wear it. Let the doctor and staff know if you have a hard time seeing or hearing.

- List all of your medications, including the dosage and refill dates. To make it easier, bring them all with you. Make notes if you have missed any doses or had any side effects or concerns that have been bothering you.

- Write down any new health problems that you have been experiencing since your last visit.
- Take along a notepad and pencil to write down the main points of your conversation, or ask the doctor or your companion to write them down for you.

Office visit

Asking questions during your visit helps you get all of the information you need from your doctor to better understand your health issues. The conversation with your doctor gives you a chance to clarify questions and be more informed about tests, medications or procedures. Below are

examples of questions to ask at your next visit.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MEDICAL TESTS:

- Why is the test being done?
- How should I get ready?
- When will I find out the results?

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR DIAGNOSIS:

- What may have caused this condition?
- Will it be permanent?
- How is this condition treated or managed?
- What will be the long-term effects on my life?

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MEDICATIONS:

- What are the common side effects?
- Will this medication interfere with any of my other medications?
- When will the medicine begin to work?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?

Article courtesy of ODS

Advanced directives

End-of-life issues are always difficult. Whether it is making future arrangements for burial or getting your financial affairs in order, sometimes it is easier to put those things out of your mind until the last minute, or until it is too late. But putting off end-of-life decisions can put a tremendous strain on grieving family members who may be left to make those decisions on their own without knowing your wishes. The other thing about life is that it is unpredictable and the unexpected can happen at any moment.

An advance directive is one way of making sure your family and doctors know your wishes regarding curative and life-sustaining treatment or the removal of life support systems. The advance directive is a set of instructions that you develop while you are able to clearly express your personal wishes verbally, in writing, and of your own free will regarding your choice of healthcare at the end of your life.

To develop an advance directive you will need two

adults, at least one of whom is not related by blood or marriage nor entitled to any portion of your estate, to serve as witnesses by signing the advance directive. Your attending physician, attorney-in-fact and healthcare staff may not serve as a witness.

Four specific physical conditions are described in the advance directive for which you can determine whether you want life support or heroic measures provided for you. The four conditions are:

- **Close to death:** Terminal illness in which death is imminent with or without treatment, where life support will only postpone the moment of death
- **Permanently unconscious:** Completely lacking an awareness of self and external environment, with no reasonable possibility of a return to a conscious state
- **Advance progressive illness:** A progressive illness that will be fatal and is unlikely to improve

- **Extraordinary suffering:** Illness or condition in which life support will not improve the person's medical condition and would cause the person permanent and severe pain

The advance directive allows you to give your healthcare representative the ability to make decisions on all, part or none of your life support needs. You also can choose how you want your care to be administered on any of the four conditions regarding tube feeding and life support, from full life support to no life support. The advance directive can be for a limited duration or can be revoked in writing or changed at anytime.

For more information and the advance directive form, contact Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) at 800-722-4134 or access the organization's website at www.oregonshiba.org

Article courtesy of the PERS Health Insurance Program

COOL TIPS TO BEAT THE HEAT *cont'd from page 1*

air while wetting the skin with lukewarm water also helps cool people down. Tell the doctor any medicines you are taking. Some may put you in danger of heatstroke.

How to prevent a heat-related illness

- Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day (between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.).
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothes. Wide-brimmed hats and umbrellas are great for shade.
- Drink water or sports drinks before, during and after you are active. If your urine is clear and pale, you're probably getting enough fluids.

- Take breaks in the shade, by a fan or in air conditioning.

What is dehydration?

Dehydration is when your body is getting rid of more water than it is taking in. Your body is made up of 75 percent water, and it eliminates water all day through sweat, urination, bowel movements and just by breathing.

If you are experiencing dehydration, you may have the following symptoms:

- Dry mouth
- Lightheadedness
- Muscle cramps and aches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Decrease in urination
- Confusion
- Weakness

You can prevent dehydration by drinking plenty of fluids, just like you would to prevent heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

After having heat exhaustion or heatstroke

Talk to your doctor about when it is safe to return to your normal activities. Heat exhaustion and heatstroke make you more sensitive to hot conditions for a week afterward. Try not to exercise too hard, and avoid being outside in hot weather as much as possible.

*GoodHealth News
Providence Health Plans*

Numbers

PERS

www.pershealth.com
P.O. Box 40187
Portland, OR 97240-0187
503-224-7377
800-768-7377

PERS Pension Office

www.oregon.gov/pers
Mailing Address
P.O. Box 23700
Tigard, OR 97281-3700

Street Address

11410 S.W. 68th Parkway
Tigard, OR 97223-8634
503-598-7377
888-320-7377

Kaiser Permanente

www.kaiserpermanente.org
500 N.E. Multnomah, Ste. 100
Portland, OR 97232-2099
503-813-2000
800-813-2000

Providence Health Plan

www.providence.org
3601 S.W. Murray Blvd. #10
Beaverton, OR 97005
503-574-8000
800-603-2340

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 4327
Portland, OR 97208-4327

Claims

P.O. Box 3125
Portland, OR 97208-3125
Providence RN
503-574-6520
800-700-0481

Clear Choice Health Plans

www.clearchoicehp.com
2965 N.E. Conners Ave.
Bend, OR 97701
541-385-5315
888-863-3637

Claims

P.O. Box 7469
Bend, OR 97701

The ODS Companies

www.odskompanies.com
601 S.W. Second Ave.
Portland, OR 97204-3156

Medical

503-243-3880
800-962-1533 (Oregon)
800-852-5195 (National)

Dental

503-243-4494
800-452-1058 (Oregon)
800-852-5195 (National)

Pharmacy

503-265-4709
888-786-7509

Claims

P.O. Box 4030
Portland, OR 97208-4030

Healthwise

A PERS Health Insurance Program newsletter



SUMMER 2009

Heat-related safety and preventing dehydration

Summer is finally here! Time for fun in the sun. Too much exposure to the sun, however, can have some serious consequences. Heat-related illnesses, including heat exhaustion and heatstroke, can result when your body can't keep itself cool. If you don't sweat enough, your body temperature rises, which can make you sick.

If you think you have heat exhaustion

Rest in a cool, shady place. Drink cool fluids, such as water or sports drinks. Do not drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages. These can make heat exhaustion worse. If you do not feel better in 30 minutes, contact your doctor.

What is heatstroke?

Heatstroke is also from your body getting too hot. It often happens if heat exhaustion is not treated. Heatstroke is very serious and requires immediate medical attention. Signs of heatstroke include confusion, fever, nausea, muscle cramps or weakness, dizziness and fast heartbeat.

If you think you have heatstroke

Get to a cool, shady place and ask someone to call a doctor. Loosen or remove clothing to start cooling yourself down. Fanning with warm

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Our commitment to you

The PERS Health Insurance Program is committed to providing information in ways that work for all of our members. Beginning fall 2009 for the 2010 plan year, PERS will develop a condensed version of the PERS Health Insurance

Program Member Handbook and Benefit Guide for current enrollees in a PERS-sponsored plan. This condensed version will include new rate and benefit comparisons and a description of any changes to benefits in the medical,

dental and prescription drug plan for the coming year. Full member handbooks will continue to be available upon request.

Article courtesy of the PERS Health Insurance Program



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Medication information for PERS ODS Prescription Drug Plan members

For a complete list of brand and generic medications covered under your current PERS prescription drug benefit, please visit ODS online at www.odskompanies.com/members, log on to myODS and consult the PERS Prescription Drug Plan List of covered drugs.