



Traveling in Retirement:

TAKE CARE OF HEALTH ON THE ROAD

Being organized and having important medical information with you is the right prescription for older travelers who are on the move.



The good news is that airlines, cruises and resorts are better equipped than ever to deal with older adults who need help.

— John Schall, CEO, Caregiver Action Network

By Sandra Block, Kiplinger — 05/03/2019

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Last winter, after David John, 64, had knee replacement surgery, the emergency room physician from Stafford Springs, Conn., decided to recuperate in Florida. He invited his then 84-year-old mother to join him. John hobbled around the airport with a cane, while his mother was in a wheelchair. When they landed, he counted 16 wheelchairs lined up at the gate.

Aging isn't stopping older adults from being on the move. But you do need to be health-smart when you

hit the road to travel. What if you are abroad, or across the U.S., and have an accident? What if a chronic illness flares up?

Sometimes, the fear of those health "what ifs" keeps people home. But that doesn't have to be the case. "The good news is that airlines, cruises and resorts are better equipped than ever to deal with older adults who need help," says John Schall, chief executive officer of Caregiver Action Network, a nonprofit for family caregivers. **Here's what experts advise:**

Get prepared

Before you go, talk to your physician or a travel medicine specialist about your itinerary. Many large hospitals have travel clinics, or locate a specialist using the International Society of Travel Medicine's directory. Disease-specific organizations may also have recommendations to make travel easier.

"Think about what can go wrong and plan ahead," says John, the emergency room physician. Where is the nearest hospital? How would you get there? The ISTM directory can help you locate clinics around the world.

You can also access a global directory of English-speaking doctors through the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (or 716-754-4883).



Review insurance

Medicare typically does not cover health care costs outside the U.S. and its territories. Some Medigap supplemental insurance plans do offer coverage for foreign emergency health care. Note that in the U.S., health care may be costlier when traveling out of a Medicare Advantage plan's local service network.

Consider buying travel insurance with medical coverage, which may cover expenses if you cancel the trip, need to be treated while traveling or need to be evacuated for medical care. Make sure the policy will cover your preexisting medical conditions. Shop coverage and costs at [InsureMyTrip.com](#) and [SquareMouth.com](#), which offer policies from major travel insurers.



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Organize medications

Keep a list of your medications, dosages and any allergies. If you will be away when it's time to replenish your pills, confer with your doctor and insurance company. Ask your insurer if you are eligible for a "vacation waiver" to refill prescriptions early.

Travel with medicine in the original bottles, and bring copies of prescriptions. That information will help a local doctor know if new medicine could interact negatively with existing pills.

Baltimore emergency room doctor Leigh Vinocur has seen people lose or run out of pills while traveling. Take extra medication or

supplies, such as insulin and glucose test strips, in case of travel delays.

Never check bags with medication, which could put you in a bind if your luggage gets lost. Carry those bags on the plane. If you have medical devices or needles in your carry-on, notify airport security when screening.



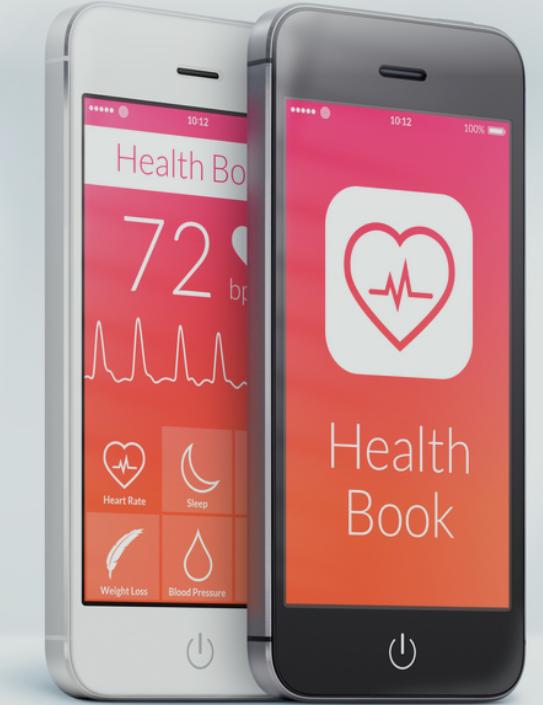
Maximize technology



You can keep a copy of your list of medications and other health details on a smartphone. Apps such as Apple Health and Capzule store personal health information.

The app Backpack Health lets you download a list of medications, health history and even test results to share with a traveling companion or emergency health care professional. The app also translates everything into several languages, including French or Portuguese.

Whether you manage a chronic health condition or worry about handling an unexpected health issue on the road, “don’t be afraid to travel,” says Jim Cavan, a former paramedic and medical company executive who created Backpack Health. “There are very few things that can’t be managed.”



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