

Travel Information for Adults with Sickle Cell Disorder, Thalassaemia or Rare Inherited Anaemia



Information for patients, families and carers

Haematology - Haemoglobinopathy
Coordinating Centre



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Vaccinations and malaria prevention

If you are travelling outside Northern Europe or North America, arrange to see your primary care team (GP or practice nurse) at least a month before you travel to find out if you need any additional vaccinations or malaria prevention for your trip. Some pharmacists also offer a Travel Clinic which can provide this advice

It is vital that you are protected against malaria, if you are travelling to an area where malaria is a risk. This applies even if you have had malaria before. If you have sickle cell disorder or have had a splenectomy, malaria is especially dangerous for you

It is important to make sure that you are up to date with all your usual vaccinations aswell , we will usually ask you about this in your regular clinic appointments and ask the GP to check your vaccination status and contact you to arrange this.

Planning transfusions

If you have regular blood transfusions or red cell exchanges, please make the haemoglobinopathy team are aware so that we can discuss with you alternative arrangements and adjust dates of planned treatment.

Managing your medications and health information

We would recommend for you to take a good supply of your normal medications away with you. Remember that you may be delayed in returning home for various reasons, so take extra supply in case this happens.

It is a good idea to request any medications you need to take with you at least 2 weeks before you travel in case of any delay.

If you are taking controlled medications (such as morphine or oxycodone), or any injectable treatments, ask your healthcare team for a letter stating that you require these medications for your trip so that you will be allowed to travel with them

Travel with your medications in your hand-luggage if possible, rather than putting them in the hold, to avoid the small risk of them being lost by the airline

If you have medication which needs to be kept refrigerated make sure you have made arrangements in advance for this and if this not available please liaise with your haemoglobinopathy team so that we are made aware and can discuss options.

If you have sickle cell disorder, make sure that you have some of your normal painkillers easily accessible to you for use during a flight. The same applies to any other emergency medication that you might require, such as inhalers or antibiotics

Take a list of your medications, a copy of your last clinic letter and a copy of your personal care plan (if you have one), which you can show during your trip if needed. You might find it easier to have electronic copies or photos of these on your phone.

Make sure that you have contact details for your Specialist Haemoglobinopathy Team in case you are unwell while travelling, so that local healthcare teams can get in touch with your doctors and nurses back home.

Travel insurance

If travelling outside the UK, arrange comprehensive travel insurance to cover your whole trip before you go

If you are having difficulty getting travel insurance, try one of the companies suggested by the Sickle Cell Society:

<https://www.sicklecellsociety.org/resource/travel-tips/>



Find out if your destination is covered by a UK Global Healthcare Insurance Card (GHIC) – this may entitle you to healthcare on the same basis as local residents in some countries.

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>



The UK Global Health Insurance card is not a substitute for travel insurance, you will still need travel insurance for when you go on holiday !

TIPS and planning for your time away

- Staying well when flying
- Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water or other fluids
- Avoid alcohol and try not to have too much caffeine, as these can make you dehydrated
- Stay active, take regular walks around the cabin and do some leg and ankle exercises regularly when sitting down
- Stay warm – airplane cabins can be cold so bring warm clothing and a blanket
- If you feel unwell during a flight, alert the flight crew immediately and let them know about your condition

If you have previously become unwell while flying, or if you have heart or lung disease or low oxygen levels, please speak to your medical team before you travel about whether you need any further advice or treatment

Staying well while abroad

It is a good idea to make a plan before travelling by finding out about the local healthcare provision where you will be travelling to, so that you know who to contact and where to go if you become unwell.

If you are travelling to a hotter climate, staying hydrated is especially important – cool drinks are especially good and remember you will need more fluid per day than usual.

Avoid (or at least limit) alcohol intake to avoid dehydration and other risks

Avoid insect bites by covering up, using mosquito nets and insect repellent – as well as carrying infections such as malaria (in some regions), insect bites can cause skin infection or lead to leg ulcers

Ensure that water and food supplies are safe, do not take risks

If you become unwell while away from home, seek medical attention – don't wait until you travel back to the UK

How do I contact you?

To contact the haemoglobinopathy clinical nurse specialists please call or email:

If you need to speak to someone more urgently, please contact the haematology triage line.

Please use the QR code or link below to take you to the Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) section of the North East and Yorkshire Haemoglobinopathy Co-ordinating Centre Website

Patient Information - NEYHCC





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