

The essentials in brief

- Plan your trip carefully! Your travel destination and pre-existing illnesses should be discussed with your family doctor, tropical doctor or a travel medicine center 6-8 weeks before your trip.
- Hectic travel programs are not suitable for senior citizens.
- The travel agency and airline should be informed in advance of any special requirements.

Advanced age alone is no reason to refrain from travelling. However, bear in mind that the body can no longer acclimatize so quickly and that hectic travel programs are therefore not suitable for older people.

Before the journey

- Choose **your destination and travel companion** carefully. Find out whether there are doctors, hospitals and pharmacies in the destination. What about accessibility at your holiday destination? Inform the travel agency and/or airline in advance if you have any special needs (e.g. wheelchair users, people with walking disabilities, oxygen equipment). If necessary, book a room suitable for the disabled.
- **Visit to your family doctor:** clarification of your general state of health. If you have any pre-existing medical conditions, you should discuss your travel plans with your family doctor before finalizing your booking. Emergency documents should be carried in English.
- **Medication:** Obtaining sufficient quantities of the medication you regularly take and information (in English if possible) on its use and dosage (medication list). Due to a time difference, you may have to take your medication at a different time (e.g. blood sugar-lowering medication and insulin). Discuss this in advance with your doctor in charge. If liquid medication is required, you must check with the airline whether transport in hand luggage is permitted. Strong painkillers from the opiate group may not be imported into certain countries; it is advisable to take a medical certificate in English with you and to obtain information from the embassy of the country in question ([Link](#)). Most medicines should be protected from direct sunlight and insulin and biologicals must be refrigerated. Distribute your medication between hand luggage and checked suitcases.
- **Vaccinations:**
 - Have your vaccination card checked and, if necessary, catch up on or complete your vaccinations.
 - Basic immunization: All persons should have basic vaccination protection against **diphtheria, tetanus (tetanus) and polio (poliomyelitis)**. The diphtheria-tetanus vaccination must also be boosted every 20 years for people aged between 25 and 65 and every 10 years for people aged 65 and over. Polio vaccinations must be boosted every 10 years when travelling to Africa and certain countries in Asia.
 - Vaccination against **hepatitis A** is recommended for most countries in which you are travelling (see information on the country page at www.healthytravel.ch) and a vaccination against **abdominal typhoid fever** may be recommended for long journeys under poor hygienic conditions.
 - A **yellow fever vaccination** is recommended for certain journeys to Africa and South America or for journeys with legal transit regulations. Some countries also have special entry regulations regarding yellow fever (see www.healthytravel.ch). It should be noted that the incidence of severe side effects from a yellow fever vaccination is higher in older people and the indication must therefore be carefully clarified. You can obtain precise recommendations from your family doctor, a tropical doctor or a travel medicine center.
 - In special situations, e.g. long-term journeys, a vaccination recommendation against **rabies** or **hepatitis B** may also be added.
 - **Flu vaccination:** Get vaccinated against flu before the flu season (northern hemisphere from December to April, southern hemisphere from May to September), for planned cruises and for all travelers to the tropics, as there is a year-round risk. Long-term travelers to the south should be vaccinated with the southern hemisphere vaccine before the winter there (only available in large travel centers).
 - **Pneumococcal vaccination** is recommended for people aged 65 and over or for people with serious pre-existing illnesses.
- **Deep vein thrombosis:** In general, people >60 years of age have a moderately increased **risk of thrombosis**, which can be further increased by pre-existing diseases in the circulatory system. Travelling >5 hours further increases the risk. Knee-

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length support stockings ("flight socks", available in specialist shops, pharmacies or travel medicine centers) can reduce this risk. Your doctor may recommend thrombosis prophylaxis with injections (Fragmin®, Fraxiparine®, Arixtra®, etc.).

- **Malaria:** The recommendations regarding malaria prophylaxis also apply to senior citizens. The risk of malaria increases with age, but the side effects of malaria medication are less frequent. Also remember to optimize insect protection. If you have a fever in a country with malaria, consult a doctor immediately!
- **Insurance cover:** Clarify your cover in the event of illness or accident, including the assumption of any repatriation costs. If necessary, take out additional health and repatriation insurance. Remember that accidents are the most frequent cause of death among travelers!

During the journey

- **Carry clearly labelled** daily used **medication in your hand luggage** (in the original packaging). Both the brand name and the generic name should be printed on the packaging.
- In addition to **flight socks**, the following measures help to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis: **Exercising the legs, regular fluid intake, avoiding coffee and alcohol.**
- **Travelers' diarrhea:** is common and can be more severe in older people, so follow optimal water and food hygiene.
- **Travel sickness:** Sensitivity decreases with age. If you have a predisposition, you can discuss taking medication with your doctor before travelling.
- **Jet lag:** symptoms increase with age. Dividing a long journey into different sections with rest days in between can be helpful. As a general rule, you should adjust your sleep/wake cycle and meal times to your new surroundings as quickly as possible. If possible, spend time in sunlight.
- **Climate:** Don't forget to drink when travelling to warm regions, even if you don't feel thirsty. Sufficient fluid intake is very important, as the feeling of thirst is reduced in old age! Use good sun protection and stay in the shade. Please note that taking certain medications can increase the skin's sensitivity to light.

After the journey

If you have a fever after travelling in a malaria area: See a doctor immediately! Fever of any kind can be a sign of malaria. However, this infectious disease can also manifest itself with other symptoms, such as confusion etc., especially at an advanced age.

Further information / references

- Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Senior Citizens: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/senior-citizens>
- NaTHNaC - Older travelers: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/70/older-travellers>
- Government of Canada, Older travelers: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/older-travellers>