

# Your Health Education

## Travel Tips for Patients on Chemotherapy

While receiving chemotherapy, you need to communicate with your health care team and plan ahead before you travel. It is **important** to take the necessary precautions. Below is a list of instructions to follow:

- Talk to your doctor about the need for vaccinations.
- Find out how well your medical insurance will cover you while traveling. Look into the need to buy travel insurance.
- Before the trip, find out where you can get medical care at the locations you plan to visit.
- Pack more medicine than you think you'll need to last the entire trip. Also take along copies of all your prescriptions.
- If possible, avoid any change in your medicines or dosages just before your trip.
- If you will visit areas where traveler's diarrhea is a risk, ask your doctor for prescribed or over-the-counter medicine to take with you.
- If you have an implanted port or pump, carry the ID card that identifies the device. If you do not have the ID card, carry a doctor's note stating the type of device and its location and purpose. Do this to avoid problems clearing airport and building security. Most implanted devices do not contain metal, but some have metal parts that may set off metal detectors.
- If your medicine must be refrigerated or specially stored, be sure to make the necessary arrangements where you are staying.
- Be careful about the food you eat and the water you drink. This is even more important if you are neutropenic (nu-tro-PEE-nik). Ask your nurse for the UPMC patient education sheets relating to a Safe Food Handling Diet or Immunosuppressed Diet as ordered by your Physician and Safe-Water Guidelines for Patients with Weakened Immunity.
- When you are in the sun, cover up. Wear hats with wide brims, shirts with long sleeves, and slacks. Keep your neck, chest, and back covered.
- Wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher when you are outside on sunny and cloudy days, even if only for a short time.
- Apply sunscreen to all exposed skin areas including the top of ears and scalp.
- Sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes before sun exposure to allow the ingredients to fully bind to the skin. Reapplication of sunscreen is just as important as putting it on in the first place, so reapply every two hours. Sunscreens should also be reapplied immediately after swimming, toweling off, or sweating a great deal.
- Where soil or sand may be contaminated with fecal contents, wear shoes and clothes that do not allow your skin to be exposed.
- To avoid mosquitoes, use insect repellent, wear long-sleeve shirts and slacks outdoors, and sleep in well-screened areas.
- If you may be sexually active while traveling outside the United States, take your own supply of condoms. Condoms sold outside the United States may be of poor quality.
- Maintain energy. Be flexible. Fatigue is a big component of cancer and its treatment, so pace yourself and allow ample time to rest and recharge.
- Wash your hands often and carry hand sanitizer with you.