



MYASTHENIA GRAVIS
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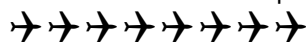
TRAVEL TIPS

for patients with
Myasthenia Gravis

PART 2



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Individuals who have Myasthenia Gravis often are challenged with the prospect of traveling. Traveling to most areas of the world is possible, however plans should include some additional forethought. Safe planning may involve an evaluation of the location, climate, activities required and medical services available. Additionally, you may benefit from speaking with other individuals who have MG and are willing to share their travel experiences.

Once you have determined a comprehensive travel itinerary you may wish to consider some of the following “helpful hints”.

Documents

- Obtain a consultation note from your GP or MG specialist including a summary of your MG condition, other relevant medical history, medication, dosages, and other treatments.
- Take a list of health care facilities and/or contact information about MG specialists in the area where you intend to travel.
- Consider packing a small resource book on MG to offer health care professionals who may not be familiar with the condition or treatments for MG
- Take a list of people you would want notified in case of emergency and their contact information including your MG specialist.
- Take a list of the medications that may exacerbate MG and include their contact information A list of medical terms in the language of the country you will be visiting

Your Notes:



Medications

- Travel with your medications in your carry on luggage. Plan for the possibility that you may get separated from your medications.
- It is best to keep medications in a cool, dark, and non-humid place when possible
- “Never leave home without it”. Consider keeping a few days’ worth of medications in your tote bag/purse during day excursions. There is always a possibility of missing a bus or train or a transportation vehicle breaking down.
- If your medications are lost, stolen or damaged you will need to have them replaced. Don’t assume that the medications you take will be readily available while traveling. Please remember that a written prescription from your doctor here will not be accepted in another country. Try to be as self sufficient as possible.

Cash or credit cards

- Take additional cash with you to pay for additional taxi fares or travel expenses.
- Subways and other inexpensive transportation options could be challenging from a physical activity perspective. Credit cards may be necessary to pay for possible hospital or medical bills.

Medical alert bracelets and cards

- Emergency physicians and nurses are trained to look for these identifiers at the time of admission to a health care facility. An Alert Card in your wallet or a Medical ID Bracelet will identify you as an MG patient and immediately assist health care professionals. Several companies supply medical alert bracelets. Some companies offer supportive services including translators who can work with health care providers in other countries.

Your Notes:



IVIG treatments

- If you are receiving IVIG treatments, plan to have your treatment just a few days before leaving. If you are planning an extended visit, there may be neurologists in other countries who can assist in arranging for treatments. These treatments would not be covered by travel insurance.

Immunizations

- Check well in advance with a Travel Medicine Clinics that will know what immunizations are necessary for your destination.
- Some immunizations have been known to aggravate MG. If immunizations are necessary, please consult your MG specialist (neurologist) to discuss if these are safe for you. It may not be beneficial for you to be immunized when your disease is active. The answer is not clear cut. The decision to receive immunization will depend on your past medical history, current condition, the medications you take and type of immunization.
 - When possible you may want to consider updating routine immunizations when your disease is stable. Immunizations such as Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) do not last a life time and require “booster” shots. These must be discussed with your MG specialist.
 - Also, immunosuppressive drugs such as prednisone, azathioprine (Imuran), mycophenolate mofetil (CellCept), cyclosporine (Neoral) may decrease the response of immunizations and may put patients at risk of not achieving full immunity. Live vaccines or partially inactivated vaccines such as polio, Herpes zoster (shingles) should not be given to MG patients who are on immunosuppressive medications.

Your Notes:



- Yellow fever vaccine must be used with extreme caution and contraindicated in MG patients who have a history of a thymic disorder, thymoma, or thymectomy. An in-depth risk assessment may be considered if a patient is stable and not on prednisone. The Center for Disease Control (US) recommends that if travel to endemic areas is necessary then significant precautions are needed against mosquito bites. There are several countries where yellow fever immunization is required for entry into the country. It is best to check prior to purchasing flights and hotels.

Travel insurance

- Ensure you have adequate medical travel insurance. Some plans do not cover pre-existing conditions. It is important to ask if your plan will cover medical and extended costs for Myasthenia Gravis. Be aware that some insurance companies will not cover you if your medications have changed within 30 days of travel. Does your provider cover evacuation insurance?
- Flight insurance for trip cancellation will allow for some flexibility in travel arrangements and help to avoid loss of deposits and fees.

Supplies

- Consider taking a small first aid kit with you. Avoid insect bites by using insect repellent and mosquito nets and wearing light colored clothes that cover your legs and arms. Use unscented make-up, deodorant, soaps because some insects are attracted to perfume.

Your Notes:

Other thoughts

- Travel with your medications in your carry on luggage.

Factors such as infections, fatigue, stress, and environment can aggravate MG. The symptoms of MG can be exacerbated by heat. The following tips may help you in hot weather.



- Consider taking a small battery operated fan with you
 - Cool showers or baths may help to reduce symptoms of muscle fatigue
 - If you experience problems with swallowing and chewing, some MG patients report that ice and cool cloths on your face and neck can help until you reach a healthcare facility.
- Travel with someone who knows about your MG and can advocate for you in an emergency situation.
 - Hand wash frequently. Take an antimicrobial hand sanitizer with you. Hand washing is the single best way to prevent the spread of infection.

Your Notes:



- Take advantage of airport services such as handicap transports. Call your airline carrier in advance and arrange for pre-checking of luggage and wheelchair services. Don't hesitate to use these helpful services. Airports are vast and may require long walking distances.
- If traveling locally, persons with MG often will choose not to travel during the peak flu season or when there is an outbreak of other contagious diseases.
- Don't leave other symptoms such as cold/flu like symptoms, diarrhea, nausea for too long. Seek medical attention as soon as possible. Sudden infections can quickly exacerbate MG.
- It is important not to depend completely on vaccines to prevent disease. There are things to know about drinking water, eating food and swimming in both ocean and fresh water while in foreign countries. Ask the travel clinics if there are any specific concerns in the country where you will be traveling.
- Make sure to follow common sense health practices like avoiding unclean eating places, drinking tap water or using dirty toilet facilities. Be especially careful with drinking water. Make sure you break the seal on the bottle yourself. It is usually safe to drink liquids that have been boiled like tea and coffee. Use only ice cubes that are made from sterilized water. Use bottled water or sterilized water for brushing teeth.
- You may want to take a closer look at the local food and restaurants you can choose from. Food preparation standards can vary. Fresh vegetables and fruits may be washed with unsterilized water.
- Use luggage with wheels that are easy to tow. Airport porters are still available in small more remote areas however busy metropolitan airports leave you pretty much on your own.
- Avoid crowds and persons who are coughing. Remember, if you are taking immunosuppressive medications, they can increase your risk of infections.

Your Notes:



- Flying across time zones may cause a change in normal wake and sleep cycles. Jet lag can be diminished by cutting down on alcohol consumption, eating light meals and sleeping as much as possible. It will help to sleep and eat according to the local time as soon as you reach your destination.



Finally, MG is not without its' challenges but by planning well in advance and considering all the characteristics of your final destination, specific activities and potential risks will ensure a safe, enjoyable and successful trip.

Additional Travel Resources

- a. [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) - Information for Travellers
- b. [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) - Travelers Health
- c. [Centre for Disease Control \(USA\)](#) - Travelers Health
- d. [World Health Organization](#) - Information for Travellers
- e. [Travel Health Online](#) - TripPrep.com

PLEASE REMEMER TO PLAY IT SAFE ... and

