



Travel and Vacation Planning

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This chapter was revised during a pandemic and COVID 19 restrictions. It addresses aspects of travel to be considered in respect to having a bleeding disorder. COVID 19 considerations will not be addressed. For information regarding COVID 19 concerns and travel in general, please review resources at the National Hemophilia Foundation (NHF) website www.hemophilia.org, or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website www.cdc.gov.

Planning for travel is important to decrease worry and allow for happy and healthy travel for individuals with a bleeding disorder and their families. Planning and preparation will include a plan of care, should trauma or other unexpected events occur.

The focus of this chapter is vacation and trip planning. However, it is important for the Hemophilia Treatment Center (HTC) staff to discuss with patients that any time they travel away from home and use vehicles such as the car, bus, boat or bike, they should follow some basic safety measures. Please see the attached MASAC document #201 recommendation (Attachment A) for guidelines regarding usage of medical alert tags and review the resources listed at the end of this chapter. Patients should be reminded to always wear an up-to-date medical alert tag and perhaps also carry a medical emergency card from their HTC in their wallet. Many HTC Chapters offer financial assistance to assist families with obtaining and maintaining a medical alert tag, if needed.

Preparations for Travel

Hemophilia Treatment Centers (HTCs), many of which have undergone a name change to reflect care for hemostasis and thrombosis patients, play an important role in preparing their patients for travel. HTCs also serve as valuable resources for families travelling to their location because of the assured expertise in managing bleeding disorders, the ease of networking between HTCs and the availability of factor products and medications used to treat bleeding disorders at an HTC. When searching for HTCs to serve as a resource, it is important to note that some centers serve only pediatric or adult patients, while others can accommodate both populations.

HTC staff should discuss the importance of planning for travel at the annual comprehensive evaluations and during other routine contacts with the family. The hemophilia nurse assists by helping the family exercise responsibility in making preparations to insure safe, enjoyable travel.

Families should consider each member's ability to participate in the activities of the trip and discuss any concerns with the HTC staff ahead of time. Patients must have a thorough knowledge of their disorder, the therapy and its purposes. They should understand the plan in case of trauma and or bleeding events. Of course, this plan must be individualized for each patient.

Travel Letters

A letter explaining the patient's condition and required treatment is an essential component of ensuring safe travel. Travel letters should be customized to express the specific needs and concerns for each patient.

Here is a general outline of information to be considered for inclusion in a travel letter:

- Demographic information: Name, date of birth, address, telephone #,
- Type and severity of bleeding disorder.
- Treatment required: product, dosage, frequency, method of administration and reason (emergency, routine bleeding, prophylaxis).
- Special considerations: inhibitor, target joints, sensitivities or allergic reactions
- Self-infusion or assisted infusion capacity.
- Authorization to carry factor concentrates, needles, syringes and other supplies
- Medical history, as needed for care concerns.
- HTC Contact information, including phone number with 24/7 hour availability

The NHF website contains a template for a travel letter you can individualize at: stepsforliving.hemophilia.org/step-up/travel. See Attachment B NHF Steps for Living Travel Letter (sample,template)

A letter regarding care guidelines in the Emergency Room is also a good idea. See Attachment C for the NHF MASAC recommendation #257, Guidelines for Emergency Department Management of Individuals with Hemophilia and Other Bleeding Disorders. See Attachment D for a sample letter to Emergency Room staff.

Locating a Hemophilia Treatment Center or Hemophilia Chapter

An essential step in planning a trip is locating a HTC in the cities, states, or countries that the family will be visiting.

Anyone can access the CDC website at dbdgateway.cdc.gov/HTCDirSearch.aspx for the HTC directory. This list includes only federally funded HTCs in the United States. There may be other medical facilities not listed on this website that can serve the patient with a bleeding disorder. Contacting a HTC or (Hemophilia) Chapter in the area of one's destination can be helpful in locating appropriate resources for medical care.

Access to the HTC directory and to a directory of Hemophilia Chapters is available through the National Hemophilia Foundation website at www.hemophilia.org. Click on the Community resources tab.

The World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) web site is www.wfh.org. This site contains a listing of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of HTCs in countries around the world. Go to the web site and click on the 'Resources' tab for the drop down option: Find a Treatment Centre.

Once the patient/family has identified the HTC of choice near their destination, they should confirm that the listed contact information is correct and may ask that their HTC send a medical information letter to the HTC at their destination. It is always helpful to call the identified HTC and verify their ability to serve the patient. It is also helpful to discuss specific concerns or requirements the individual may have in their treatment plan. The patient should have a copy of the medical information travel letter to carry with him/her.

FACTOR CONCENTRATE, and OTHER MEDICATIONS

Supply and Administration

The HTC nurse can help determine the quantity of factor, infusion supplies and other treatment products that may be necessary to take along for travel. Considerations as to the length of stay, self-infusion capability, plan for on demand or prophylaxis treatment, and the availability of the product at the proposed destination should be used to determine a reasonable amount to transport. Possible sources of treatment products may be explored. If a local HTC or the patient's homecare company can provide medications, supplies or nursing support at the travel destination, this may reduce the need to transport large amounts of factor and supplies or to visit a hospital for infusions.

Biohazard containers for sharps and contaminated materials must be included, and arrangements for disposal should be planned.

The nurse should help coordinate a medication schedule for routine treatments, keeping in mind any change in time zones.

Storage

Storage of factor products, medications and supplies while in transit and upon arrival should be addressed. The HTC nurse should review with families the concerns regarding light exposure and temperatures for medications as well as storage of medications and supplies in a safe and secure location. This will be individualized, and it should be noted that not all factor products have the same storage requirements. Nurse discussions with families should include instructions for marking date factor is moved to room temperature, noting most products should not be returned to refrigeration if this is a possible part of the plan.

Air Travel

Patients should keep medicine and supplies with them and not check medications through as luggage.

Airline restrictions are subject to change. Air travelers should check with their airline at least several days prior to departure to learn the specific regulations regarding the transport of medications and supplies. NHF recommends that when traveling with clotting factor, an individual should bring a prescription from his/her physician with contact information, as well as a letter from the physician/HTC that provides a brief explanation of the condition and the need for the medication. In addition, when needles are brought onto an airplane in carry-on luggage, the traveler must have clotting factor with him/her as well.

See the full NHF travel recommendations at:

stepsforliving.hemophilia.org/step-up/travel. The website includes a sample travel letter template that you can individualize for each patient. See Attachment C

Insurance

The patient and family should have current insurance information available at all times. It is important for families to determine whether there are restrictions in coverage for travel outside their area and the costs that may be involved, especially for international travel.

Accessibility

If a wheelchair will be required, it should be determined if all locations to be visited are wheelchair accessible. If traveling by airline, train or bus, call ahead to make arrangements if a wheelchair and/or assistance is necessary.

Additional Considerations for International Travel

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site www.cdc.gov/travel/ contains recommendations for immunizations and other concerns when traveling abroad.

Providers of medical alert tags, such as MedicAlert, may also provide assistance for travel, such as locating physicians and translation services. See www.medicalert.org or call 1-800-432-5378. This resource is provided as a sample of information and services that may be available and is not meant as a recommendation of any particular service organization.

Encourage patients to have a letter summarizing their care in the language of the country they are visiting. Hospitals with International Centers or Travel Care clinics may be able to help or provide resources for this service. Problems beyond simple language barriers may involve the transport of drugs, particularly for pain, and transport of syringes and needles. A note written on the prescription indicating their necessity may be helpful.

The Immunocompromised Traveler

The nurse should remind the patient to contact his/her infectious disease healthcare provider well in advance of travel. A physical exam including blood work, prescriptions for medications, and recommendations for vaccinations all need to be addressed.

For more information on Travelers with Special needs, visit the CDC website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/chronic-illnesses>

Resources:

1. National Hemophilia Foundation. Nurses' Guide to Bleeding Disorders 2013. Chapter 15 Travel and Vacation Planning by Susan Hunter, RN, BSN.

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2. National Hemophilia Foundation Website: Community Resources for HTC and Chapter Directories
 3. National Hemophilia Foundation Website: Steps for Living, Step Up, Travel
 4. World Federation of Hemophilia Website: World HTC Directory
 5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov
 6. Gorlin JB, Hooke MC. Use of emergency medical identification in the paediatric haemophilia population: a national study. *Haemophilia* 2011; 17:215-22.

Contact information:

1. National Hemophilia Foundation
7 Penn Plaza Suite 1204
New York, NY 10001, United States
Phone: (212) 328-3700
Toll-free number: 888-463-6643
Email: info@hemophilia.org
Web site: www.hemophilia.org

2. World Federation of Hemophilia
1425, boul. Rene Levesque Quest
Bureau 1200
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1T7 Canada
Telephone: 1 (514) 875-7944
• Fax: 1(514) 875-8916
E-mail: wfh@wfh.org
Web site: www.wfh.org

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Have Questions? Contact
Visit CDC-INFO
Call 800-232-4363
Email CDC-INFO
Website: www.CDC.gov
CDC Travelers' Information website: www.cdc.gov/travel/

4. MedicAlert Foundation
888-633-4298.
www.MedicAlert.org

Attachment A
NHF MASAC Recommendation #201

Recommendation on Use of Emergency Medical Identification Devices for Children

Attachment B

NHF Steps for Living Travel Letter (sample,template)

Attachment C

NHF MASAC recommendation #257

Guidelines for Emergency Department Management of Individuals with Hemophilia and Other Bleeding Disorders

Attachment D

Sample Letter to Emergency Room Staff

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