

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

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CHOOSING VACATION DESTINATIONS

Choosing the right travel destination isn't always as easy as it sounds. There are many things to consider, including personal travel preferences, who will be going, when to travel, estimating a budget, where to actually go, what accommodations to make and what activities to do. For the patient with allergies and asthma one of the biggest concerns is finding the right place to go, without risking an increase in their symptoms. Here are a few locales to consider.

- Tropical destinations tend to have lower pollen counts and the ocean/sea breeze can do wonders for those with allergies.
- Although locales with higher elevations tend to have lower dust mite counts, for the asthmatic, elevations above 5000 feet may cause an increase in chest symptoms.
- The East Coast may not be the best place to visit in late August, as Ragweed pollen counts are usually higher in the fall months.

BEFORE YOU GO:

Allergy reactions can occur anywhere and anytime, but there are several steps you can take to ensure that you and your family have a safe, fun-filled vacation.

- Make an appointment with your healthcare provider before you leave for your trip, especially if you plan to travel to areas where certain vaccinations may be required.

- Prepare a travel health kit with items you may need, such as basic first aid supplies, your prescriptions and OTC remedies. Make sure that you have enough of your allergy and asthma medications, and ideally, you should bring along about an extra week's worth of medications in the event that there is a delay on your return trip. Depending on your destination you may also want to pack a mask, insect repellent, sunscreen (SPF15 or higher), aloe, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, water disinfection tablets, and your health insurance card. If you have a severe food allergy or a history of anaphylaxis, make sure to bring a current adrenaline-injector device with you, which should be kept in your hand carry luggage.
- Pack safe snacks or meals to have during your flight and in the airport. Avoid eating foods with no ingredient labels during travel and ask airport restaurants about the ingredients before you order.
- Bring cards listing all your food allergies and get them translated into the local language where you are traveling.
- If you have them, bring your asthma and food allergy action plans, including copies in the local language.
- Check access to medical care, especially if you plan to visit a remote area.
- If you plan to fly, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol to stay well hydrated.
- Use nasal saline to keep your nasal passages moist. If you experience ear discomfort during takeoff and landing, speak with your physician about using a decongestant nasal spray or an oral decongestant. Be careful, however, as decongestant nasal sprays can be habit-forming.

Taking a few extra steps can help to minimize your symptoms from flaring during a well-deserved trip. As always, we are here to help!