

# Travel and prostate cancer



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This fact sheet is for men with prostate cancer who are thinking about going on holiday in the UK or abroad. It has tips on preparing for your trip, arranging travel insurance and how to look after yourself while you're away. Your partner and family might also find this helpful.

## How can I prepare for my trip?

### Speak to your doctor or nurse

Ask your doctor or nurse about how travel plans might affect your medical treatment. They may be able to suggest when is good for you to travel, and help you think about where to go and how long to go away for. If you're unsure how your diagnosis or treatment could affect your travel plans, speak to our Specialist Nurses, in confidence, on 0800 074 8383.



### Think about how you're feeling

Your cancer or treatment may make you feel tired or unwell. You may need to urinate more often and some treatments, such as chemotherapy, can make you more sensitive to the sun. This shouldn't stop you from travelling but may affect where you go and how long for, what you do while you're away and what you need to take with you.

## Think about your medication

If you're taking medicines with you, you might find these tips helpful.

- Make sure you've got enough medicine for your whole trip – and extra in case of delays or emergencies. If possible, carry a couple of days' supply in your hand luggage in case your luggage is lost.
- Ask your doctor for a letter saying what your medicines are for.
- Keep a list of the proper names (not just the brand names) and doses of your medicines in case you need to get more.
- Keep your medicines in their labelled containers.

### Top travel tip

Some drugs such as strong pain-relieving drugs can't be taken abroad without a doctor's letter. Others might be restricted in some countries. Make sure your medicine is legal where you're going. Check this with the embassy or High Commission of the country you're visiting.

You can't take more than a certain amount of some medicines outside the UK. These are called controlled drugs and may include strong pain-relieving drugs. The limit is usually about a three month supply.



If you need to take more, apply for a Home Office export licence at least two weeks before you travel. Download a form online at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk) or call 020 7035 6330.

### Travelling with your medicine

- Some airlines have rules about travelling with prescription medicines. You may not be able to have them in your hand luggage. Or you might have to check them in beforehand. Check if you need to make arrangements before you travel.
- If you need a letter or licence to travel with your medicine, keep it in your hand luggage together with the medicine in its original packaging.
- Carry your medicines in a cool bag if they need to be kept cool. And make sure there's a fridge to store them in at your destination.
- If you pack medicines in your suitcase, check if hot or cold temperatures can damage them. Tell the check-in staff at the airport so they can make sure your suitcase is stored at the right temperature.

### Find out if you need any vaccinations

You may need to have vaccinations before you travel. Check what you might need on [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org) or ask your practice nurse at least six weeks before you go.

Before you book your trip, talk to your doctor about whether it's safe for you to have any new vaccinations. If you need to take anti-malarial medicine, ask your doctor whether this will affect any other medicines you're taking.

### Think about practical things

- Having cancer, as well as having treatments like chemotherapy, surgery and hormone therapy, can increase your risk of getting a blood clot. You may be advised not to fly for a period of time so check with your doctor before booking any long haul flights.

- Carry information about your condition, medicines and treatments in case you need to see a doctor while you're away.
- If you're travelling to a non-English speaking country, have your medical documents translated. Ask your doctor or nurse for more information about this.
- If you're travelling to a different time zone, ask your doctor to help you plan a medicine routine that fits in with the new local time.
- If you need a wheelchair, access to a toilet or a special meal for your journey, make sure you arrange this before you travel.
- Make sure you drink plenty of water on your holiday, including on the plane, to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- If you have urinary problems and use pads, pack enough for your trip and a few extra in case of delays.
- Pack extra pads and medicine in your hand luggage in case your suitcase gets lost.
- If you use a catheter, take a spare catheter and plenty of extra drainage bags and catheter valves with you. Speak to your nurse about caring for your catheter while you're away. And ask your doctor for a letter called a medical validation certificate that explains what your catheter equipment is for. It may make things easier if customs officials decide to search your bag. Some catheter delivery services may deliver abroad if necessary.
- If you've had permanent seed brachytherapy (treatment where radioactive seeds are implanted into the prostate), you could set off airport radiation sensors. Ask your doctor for an advice card to take with you that says you've had treatment with internal radiation.  Read our Tool Kit fact sheet, **Permanent seed brachytherapy**, if you want to know more about this treatment.

- If you're visiting an English speaking country, use our toilet card to help you access a toilet quickly if you have urinary problems.

### Apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

If you're travelling to a European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, make sure you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EEA is made up of the European Union (EU) countries and Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

#### Top travel tip

The EHIC is free, so beware of scam websites that ask you to pay for it.

### Things you should know about the EHIC

- It replaces the old E111 form.
- Each person travelling, including children, should have their own EHIC.
- It covers the cost of state healthcare only.
- It allows you to have medical treatment in most European countries for free, or at a lower cost. You may have to pay for some things at the time but you can claim the money back later.
- It covers the cost of necessary medical treatment because of either illness or an accident during your trip. It covers the cost of treatment for your cancer and other conditions you already have, as long as you didn't go abroad specifically for that treatment.
- It doesn't always cover the full cost of treatment and it doesn't cover everything. For example, it won't cover the cost of bringing you or your travelling companions back to the UK.
- Each country's healthcare system is different so your EHIC might not cover everything that would be free on the NHS. But you should get the same treatment as a resident of the country you're visiting.

To apply for an EHIC visit [www.ehic.org.uk](http://www.ehic.org.uk) or call 0300 330 1350.

You can read about getting medical treatment in the EEA in the Department of Health booklet Health Advice for Travellers. Download a copy from their website at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or call 0207 210 4850.

## Travel insurance

### Arrange travel insurance if you're going abroad

If you're travelling abroad, it's a good idea to buy travel insurance before your trip. Travel insurance covers the cost of things that go wrong while you're away, such as losing your suitcase or cancelling your holiday. It can also cover the cost of any medical treatment that isn't covered by the EHIC, so it's important to get travel insurance even if you're staying in Europe. Some insurance companies will only cover you if you have an EHIC.

### Buying travel insurance

Getting travel insurance can be stressful or expensive if you've been diagnosed with prostate cancer. The following questions and answers may help you find the right insurance.

#### Q. Will having prostate cancer make it harder to get travel insurance?

**A.** Yes. This is because insurers think you're more likely to need medical treatment while you're away or cancel your trip at the last minute. Some companies will not insure you if you've been diagnosed with cancer, or you may need to provide a letter from your doctor saying you're fit to travel. Your doctor may charge you for this letter. Most men are able to find insurance after shopping around. But some men decide to accept insurance that doesn't cover everything related to their cancer.

#### Top travel tip

Shop around to get the best deal.

## Q. Where can I get travel insurance?

A. You can get travel insurance from the following companies.

- **Travel insurance providers**

These companies are generally the cheapest but only insure you for certain things or if you meet certain criteria. For example, your insurance may not cover medical treatment or emergencies related to your cancer. Or they might have time limits on how soon they will insure you after treatment. Check the policy details to make sure you're completely covered for your trip.

- **Specialist companies**

These companies provide travel insurance for people with medical problems, including cancer. Their prices vary a lot and some policies can be very expensive. Check if the policy includes treatment related to your cancer before you buy it.

- **Insurance brokers**

Insurance brokers can give advice and arrange insurance for you. Brokers shop around for the best deal. They can make getting insurance easier and sometimes offer you a better price than individual companies. But they do charge a fee. You can find lists of qualified insurance brokers on the British Insurance Brokers' Association website.

## Q. Can I arrange my travel insurance online?

A. You can look for insurance companies or brokers and get quotes online. But you will usually need to speak to someone before your insurance is approved because they'll want to be clear about your medical history and current health if you've been diagnosed with cancer.

## Q. What questions will the insurance company ask me?

A. They will ask about your age, marital status and occupation. They may also ask for information about your trip, medical history and prostate cancer, such as:

- when you were diagnosed
- the stage and grade of your cancer
- what treatment you're having or have had
- any follow-up care you're receiving
- any side effects you're having
- other medical conditions, such as high blood pressure or cholesterol
- any other medical treatments you're having.

Some insurers use medical advisors to work out the cost of your insurance. They may want a doctor's letter or ask your doctor to fill in a questionnaire about your health. Some insurers will charge you if they have to contact your doctor, so it may be better to sort this yourself.

### Top travel tip

Tell the insurance company about your prostate cancer and any other health problems. If you don't, they may not pay for medical treatment or for getting you home if you become unwell on holiday. Tell them about any changes to your health between the time you accepted the policy and going on your trip. This includes annual insurance policies.

## Q. Will my travel insurance be expensive?

**A.** The price of insurance varies a lot. The amount you pay (the premium) and the amount you pay when you make a claim (the excess) are likely to be higher than if you hadn't been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Your stage of cancer and treatment will affect how much it costs and it could be expensive if you have advanced or recurrent cancer.

In general, prices go down the longer your cancer has been under control. So if you have recently been diagnosed, have had or are having treatment, you may pay more. Policies that don't cover treatment related to your cancer are more risky but may be cheaper. You may want to do this if you feel your cancer is unlikely to cause any problems while you're away.

### Top travel tip

Some companies will ask that all members of your party are covered under the same policy. This can be a good idea because it means all your companions are covered if they need to come home early with you.

## Q. What should I ask the insurance company?

**A.** Make sure you fully understand your policy and what it covers. Ask your insurance company if you're unsure about anything. Think about asking these questions.

- What does the policy include?
- Does it cover treatment related to my cancer?
- Does it cover me if I have to come home early because of my cancer?
- How much is the excess?
- Do other people travelling with me need to be covered under the same policy?

- Does my doctor need to provide a letter or fill in a questionnaire? If so, will you charge if you contact my doctor?

### Tips for finding travel insurance

- Look up the cost of insurance before booking your trip. Some destinations are more expensive than others.
- Get quotes from travel insurance providers and specialist companies.
- Check the small print. Make sure you know exactly what you are and aren't covered for.
- If your cancer is unlikely to make you unwell while you're away, you could take out insurance that covers everything except your cancer.
- If you attend a local cancer support group, ask around to see if anyone can recommend an insurance company.

### Have you got questions about planning a holiday?

Ask other men about their experiences in our online community or through our one-to-one support service.

Visit [prostatecanceruk.org/get-support](https://prostatecanceruk.org/get-support)

# Things to do before your trip



**Book your holiday**

**8 weeks before**



Start looking for travel insurance. This might take longer than you expect. Some men do this even before booking a holiday.

**7 weeks before**



Get any vaccinations you need.



Check with your airline whether you need to make any special arrangements for transporting your medicine or medical equipment.

**6 weeks before**

**5 weeks before**

Arrange your Home Office export licence if you need one.



Leave yourself plenty of time.  
You might want to do things in a different order.



Check that everyone who is travelling has a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), if travelling in Europe.



Ask your doctor or nurse for any letters you might need.



Book and confirm all the details of your travel insurance policy.

o o  
holiday

**4 weeks before**

**2 weeks before**

**3 weeks before**

**1 week before**



If you have a disability or special food needs, ask your travel company to make the right arrangements for your journey.

Get any important medical documents translated.



Start packing.



## Looking after myself while I'm away

While you're on holiday, you should:

- take extra care of your health
- avoid strenuous activity if you're not used to it
- keep safe in the sun and avoid extreme temperatures
- treat cuts, scratches and bites with antiseptic cream straight away
- wear insect repellent if you're somewhere where insects are a problem
- always carry someone's contact details in case of emergency.

Help avoid blood clots during your flight by:

- exercising your legs
- wearing loose-fitting clothes
- drinking plenty of water or non-alcoholic drinks
- wearing compression socks (if your doctor advises you to).

If you've recently had a type of chemotherapy called docetaxel or had radiotherapy, you may be more sensitive to the sun, so:

- avoid direct sunlight between 11am and 3pm
- use strong sunscreen (around SPF30)
- wear loose cotton clothing, a hat and sunglasses.

Certain treatments, such as chemotherapy, can weaken your immune system. This can make it easier for you to get infections. Less developed countries in South America, Africa and Asia may not have the same water cleaning processes as in Europe. Drinking water from these countries can increase your risk of developing infections. You can take steps to avoid getting infections, such as:

- drinking clean water only – boil it first if you're unsure and avoid ice in drinks
- eating properly cooked food – avoid salads, raw vegetables and street food
- peeling fruits before you eat them.

### Top travel tip

If you have a weak immune system, ask your doctor or nurse to give you antibiotics for your trip, in case you pick up an infection.

## More information

### Association of British Insurers (ABI)

[www.abi.org.uk](http://www.abi.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7600 3333

Information about insurance cover and choosing a policy that's right for you.

### British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA)

[www.biba.org.uk](http://www.biba.org.uk)

Telephone: 0870 950 1790

Explains insurance terms and helps you find your nearest broker.

### British Red Cross

[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

Can provide a driver and vehicle to help you get around, for example getting to and from the airport. It is not available in all UK locations.

### Cancer Research UK

[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

Nurse helpline: 0808 800 4040

Information on planning your holiday and getting travel insurance if you've been diagnosed with cancer.

### Department of Health

[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

Telephone: 020 7210 4850

Information about travelling safely and taking care of your health in EU and non EU countries.

### European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

[www.ehic.org.uk](http://www.ehic.org.uk)

Telephone: 0300 330 1350

Information about the card and how to get one.

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[www.gov.uk/fco](http://www.gov.uk/fco)

Government travel advice and details of foreign embassies and high commissions in the UK.

### Heathrow Airport

[www.heathrowairport.com](http://www.heathrowairport.com)

Telephone: 0844 335 1801

Information about services for people with special needs at each UK airport.

### Home Office Drugs Branch

[www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs](http://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs)

Telephone: 020 7035 6330

A complete list of controlled drugs and information about getting an export or import licence for your medicine.

### Macmillan Cancer Support

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Telephone: 0808 808 0000

Advice on planning your trip and choosing insurance and a list of insurance companies that cover people with cancer.

### National Travel Health Network and Centre

[www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org)

Telephone: 020 3447 5943

Travel health information about every country and a list of vaccinations you may need before you travel.

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Information about travelling with cancer and getting healthcare abroad.

## About us

Prostate Cancer UK fights to help more men survive prostate cancer and enjoy a better life.

This fact sheet is part of the Tool Kit. You can order more Tool Kit fact sheets, including an



**A to Z of medical words**, which explains some of the words and phrases used in this fact sheet.

Download and order our fact sheets and booklets from our website at **prostatecanceruk.org/publications** or call us on **0800 074 8383**.

At Prostate Cancer UK, we take great care to provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. We hope these will add to the medical advice you have had and help you to make decisions. Our services are not intended to replace advice from your doctor.

References to sources of information used in the production of this fact sheet are available at **prostatecanceruk.org**

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### Tell us what you think

If you have any comments about our publications, you can email:

**literature@prostatecanceruk.org**





## Speak to our Specialist Nurses

0800 074 8383\*

[prostatecanceruk.org](http://prostatecanceruk.org)

### Donate today – help others like you

Did you find this information useful? Would you like to help others in your situation access the facts they need? Every year, 40,000 men face a prostate cancer diagnosis. Thanks to our generous supporters, we offer information free to all who need it. If you would like to help us continue this service, please consider making a donation. Your gift could fund the following services:

- £10 could buy a Tool Kit – a set of fact sheets, tailored to the needs of each man with vital information on diagnosis, treatment and lifestyle.
- £25 could give a man diagnosed with a prostate problem unlimited time to talk over treatment options with one of our Specialist Nurses.

To make a donation of any amount, please call us on **0800 082 1616**, visit [prostatecanceruk.org/donate](http://prostatecanceruk.org/donate) or text **PROSTATE to 70004\***.

There are many other ways to support us. For more details please visit [prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved](http://prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved)

\*You can donate up to £10 via SMS and we will receive 100% of your donation. Texts are charged at your standard rate. For full terms and conditions and more information, please visit [prostatecanceruk.org/terms](http://prostatecanceruk.org/terms)



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To be reviewed May 2017

**Call our Specialist Nurses from Mon to Fri 9am - 6pm, Wed 10am - 8pm**

\*Calls are recorded for training purposes only.

Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Prostate Cancer UK.

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