

Activity levels

If you are sightseeing, it is likely that you will be using up more energy than you do at home or at work. It is important to think about whether you need to adjust your meal plan accordingly.

Food abroad

While many people enjoy travelling because of the new foods they can experience, for someone with an eating disorder, this can be a major source of anxiety. It is important to seriously think about whether you will be able to manage without the regular foods that you eat. If you want to take food away with you, check with customs for that specific country that you will be allowed to do so, as some e.g. Australia, have very strict rules on importing foods.

You may also wish to think about whether self-catering accommodation is more achievable than eating out regularly.

And finally...

Going on holiday can be a very positive experience, but if you have an eating disorder you should consider all the points above and plan things in advance. Speak to the professionals involved in your care, and your support network, early on, so that you can all agree on a safe plan. There are no hard and fast rules about BMI, but your overall clinical picture needs to be taken into consideration.



THINKING OF GOING ON HOLIDAY?

Here are a few things to consider if you have an eating disorder...

EHIC and Travel Insurance

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC, previously known as E111) allows card holders to access state-provided healthcare in the European Economic Area (EEA) for a reduced price, and sometimes for free. It covers pre-existing medical conditions, such as your eating disorder. You can apply using the following link:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk/Internet/startApplication.do>

(NB. Never apply using a site which asks for a fee)

The EHIC is **NOT** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover you for healthcare expenses outside the state-provided system, and will not cover the cost of bringing you back to the UK. Your insurance provider needs to be made aware of your eating disorder, otherwise your insurance will be invalid.

Flights

As a general rule, medical professionals do not advise taking long-haul flights if your BMI is under 15. There are many things to consider when booking flights:

- **Meals**

It is important to check whether your airline provides food on board, and for you to consider whether you will be able to manage these realistically, especially when there may be limited options on board. You may wish to take your own meals and snacks with you.

- **Hydration**

Flights can make anyone dehydrated due to the low humidity in the plane, coupled with alcohol intake. Dehydration on flights is a risk factor for developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT), which are blood clots in your legs. It is important that you are able to drink more water than you would usually, and you should consider wearing below knee compression stockings.

- **Travel sickness**

If you suffer with travel sickness, consider how you will be able to manage your meals when you are feeling unwell. Consider finding medicinal, herbal, or alternative remedies to try and prevent this.

Jet lag and time difference

If you are awake for approximately 16 hours a day, you will often have a meal plan that advises 3 regular meals, and 3 snacks in between. If you are about to take a long haul flight and know that you will be awake for a lot longer than that, then you will need to plan extra meals and snacks, so that you continue to eat every couple of hours.

If you know that you are someone who struggles to eat when you're tired, speak to the people you're planning to travel with, and see if there is a way that they can help support you with this.

Renting a car

If you choose to rent a car abroad, the fee will usually include insurance. Pre-existing conditions may make this insurance invalid, and leave you with potentially large costs if you have an accident. Check all the fine print, and do your homework before you go.

Vaccinations

If your immune system is not working well (i.e. if you have a low white cell count (WCC)) you should seriously consider whether you will be putting yourself at increased risk of infection depending on where you are intending to go. You may need to have vaccinations before you go. If your immune system is weak, you might not be allowed to have the vaccinations, so you should attend your local travel clinic at your GP surgery well in advance to plan this carefully.