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Planning for a trip when you have sickle cell disease

Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: September 2026
Next review: September 2029
Leaflet number: 1432 Version: 2

Introduction

This is a guide for people with sickle cell disease planning trips abroad. Having sickle cell disease should not stop you from travelling abroad. It means that some extra planning is needed to be able to travel safely.

Planning your trip

Anti-malaria and vaccines

Having sickle cell disease **does not** stop you from catching malaria. If you are going to a place where malaria is common, it is important to take anti-malaria medicines. Use mosquito nets and mosquito sprays.

Make sure you arrange any vaccines that are needed where you are travelling to. Many of these are not covered in the NHS. Check with your GP or local pharmacy and see what travel services are available.

Flights and insurance

You must buy travel insurance in case you need to get treatment whilst abroad. Medical treatment abroad without insurance can be very expensive. This is more so if you need an air ambulance back to the UK for treatment.

Some insurance companies need proof that you are fit to fly. You will need to speak with your haematologist or your GP.

If you have had a serious crisis within 2 weeks of going away, we advise that you **do not fly.**

Travelling against medical advice can void your insurance

When booking flights, you should also tell the airline of your condition. For some patients we may recommend flying with oxygen (especially if you have had crises that have affected your lungs). Some airlines charge for this service. It needs to be planned well in advance. If this includes you, talk about it with your haematologist. Also check with the airline to see if they have any limits on what medications they will let you take on the plane.

Key points

- Tell your haematologist as well as your doctor as soon as possible about your plans. This will let us work out if you are well enough to go and give you a letter stating your treatment to take with you.
- You are up-to-date with your regular vaccinations
- In case you need medical care whilst travelling, know where to find the closest hospital or clinic.
- Make sure you have enough medication for the entire trip.

The journey

Flight

Keep your medicines in your hand luggage when you travel. Also take the letter from your doctor that explains your treatment or medicines. This is very important if you take strong opioid painkillers, such as morphine.

The high altitude and cold, dry cabin can affect your sickle cell. So here are a few tips to help reduce the impact:

- Drink enough water.
- Stay warm. Planes can be cold. Travel with warm clothing or ask for blankets on the flight.
- Move around the cabin. Do not stay seated for too long. Having sickle increases your risk of developing clots so it is important to keep the blood flowing.
- Avoid alcohol during the flight. It can both dehydrate you and cause you to stay seated for too long.

If you have any of the following during or after your flight, ask for medical help quickly:

- Pain, swelling or redness in your legs or calves,
- Chest pain,
- Shortness of breath,

Whilst you are away

Other illness

People who travel often suffer from feeling sick and with diarrhea. Take some oral rehydration sachets, such as Dioralyte, with you to make sure you stay hydrated. You can get these from most pharmacies and supermarkets. To try to avoid going through a pain crisis, you need medical help quickly if you cannot swallow any liquids.

A crisis

While we hope that everything goes smoothly, you need to be ready in case anything goes wrong while you are away:

- Ask for medical help quickly.
- Tell your insurance company as soon as possible – healthcare outside of the UK can be very expensive. Getting your insurance company to help will be 1 less thing to worry about.

We wish you all the best! If you have any queries, call your specialist nurse or haematologist.

Contact details

Haemoglobinopathy Clinical Nurse Specialist:

Office phone number: 0116 258 6081

Mobile: 07950 891 490

Leicester's Hospitals (UHL) switchboard:

Telephone: 0300 303 1573

Leicester Royal Infirmary

Infirmary Square, Leicester LE1 5WW

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہِ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أُخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
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If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead
or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

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