

Travel and prostate cancer



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

A lot of this information is common sense, but can be easy to forget in the run up to a trip.

If you're unsure how your diagnosis or treatment might affect your travel plans, speak to our Specialist Nurses, in confidence, on 0800 074 8383, or chat to them online.

Symbols

These symbols appear in this fact sheet to guide you to more information:



Speak to our Specialist Nurses



Read our publications

How can I prepare for my trip?

Holidays can be a great way to relax and get away from things. Having prostate cancer shouldn't stop you from travelling, but you may need to plan and make special arrangements to help you enjoy your 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 the best time for you to travel, and help you think about where to go and for how long. Your doctor may advise you not to travel, or to delay your trip if it isn't safe for you.

Think about how you're feeling

Your cancer or treatment may make you feel tired or unwell. If possible, wait a few months after treatment before planning a trip. You may need to urinate more often after treatment and some treatments, such as chemotherapy, can make you more sensitive to the sun or increase your risk of infection. This may affect where you go, how long for, what you do while you're away and what you need to take with you.



Going on holiday helps me forget my cancer for a while. If I feel well enough, I don't hesitate.

A personal experience

Think about your medication

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

- Make sure you have enough medicine for your whole trip – and extra in case of delays or emergencies. If possible, carry all your medication in your hand luggage and pack a spare supply in your hold luggage.
- Ask your doctor for a letter saying what your medicines are for at least four weeks before you travel. Make sure it includes the scientific or generic names (not just the brand names) and doses of each medicine. You may have to pay for this letter.
- Check the expiry date of your medicines to make sure they're safe to take while you are away.
- Take a copy of your prescription with you in case you need to get more.
- Keep your medicines in their labelled containers and original packaging. If you have prescription medication organised in a pill box, make sure it has a label confirming what is inside. Ask your GP or pharmacist for one if it doesn't.

Top travel tip

If you need to get some more medicines while you're away, buy them from a licensed pharmacy. Some places sell medicines that are fake or have different ingredients – these may not work and could even be harmful. Ask the pharmacist about the ingredients and check they match the ones you need.

For some medicines, you can only take a certain amount out of the UK. These are called controlled drugs and include some strong pain-relieving drugs. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if your medicine contains a controlled drug.

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. You can find out more about controlled drugs and how to apply for a licence by calling 020 7035 6330, or by visiting www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs

Top travel tip

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



I give myself plenty of time to get through security.

A personal experience

Travelling with your medicine

- Contact your airline to 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 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. You may be allowed to use an ice pack or cooling gel pack if you have a letter from your doctor or nurse explaining that your medicines need to be kept cool. Check with your airline before you fly.
- If you pack spare medicines in your suitcase, check if hot or cold temperatures can damage them. Contact your airline in advance to find out if they can store your suitcase at the right temperature and tell check-in staff at the airport too.



We hadn't thought that you might have to explain at customs what your medication is for.

A personal experience

Find out if you need any vaccinations

You may need to have vaccinations before you travel, depending on where you're going. Check at www.travelhealthpro.org.uk or ask a practice nurse at your GP surgery at least eight 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.

You shouldn't have any live vaccines if you're having chemotherapy or have had chemotherapy within the last six months. This is because your immune system might not be strong enough. Vaccines against shingles and yellow fever are both examples of live vaccines.

Think about practical things

- Having cancer, as well as treatments like chemotherapy, surgery and hormone therapy, can increase your risk of blood clots. You may be advised not to fly for a while, so check with your doctor before booking any flights.
- Carry information about your condition, medicines and treatments in case you need to see a doctor while you're away.
- Plan ahead to help you manage any urinary or bowel problems. For example, book an aisle seat close to the toilets and find out where the nearest public toilets are in advance.
- If you're travelling to a non-English speaking country, consider having 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 with your airline, cruise line or train company before you travel.
- Make sure you drink plenty of water on your holiday, including on the plane, to avoid becoming dehydrated, particularly if you're visiting a hot country.
- If you have urinary or bowel problems and use pads, pack enough for your trip and a few extra in case of delays.
- Pack extra pads and medicine in your hold luggage in case your hand luggage 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. 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 have a letter from your doctor or nurse, you may be allowed extra baggage for your catheter equipment and other medical supplies. Rules are different for each airline so always check before you travel.
- If you've had permanent seed brachytherapy (where tiny radioactive seeds are put into your prostate), you could set off metal or radiation sensors at the airport, train station or cruise port. If you don't already have one, ask your doctor for an advice card to take with you that says you've had treatment with internal radiation. Read our fact sheet, **Permanent seed brachytherapy**, for more information about this treatment.



- Use our **Urgent toilet card** to help you get to a toilet quickly if you have urinary or bowel problems. If you're visiting a non-English speaking country, you can buy an international travel version from www.theibsnetwork.org/cant-wait-card



I always use a toilet when I find one, not just when it's necessary.

A personal experience

Apply for a UK Global Health Insurance Card (UK GHIC)

If you're travelling to a country in the European Union (EU), make sure you have a UK Global Health Insurance Card (UK GHIC). The GHIC replaces the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). If you have an EHIC, you can still use it until the date runs out. You will then have to apply for a GHIC instead.

Top travel tip

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

Things you should know about the UK GHIC

- It replaces the old E111 form and the EHIC.
- Each person travelling, including children, should have their own GHIC.
- It covers the cost of state healthcare only. Some parts of Europe don't have state healthcare, so you may not be covered in those areas.
- It allows you to have medical treatment in most European countries for free, or at a lower cost.
- It covers the cost of necessary medical treatment because of either an illness or an accident during your trip. It allows you to

receive treatment for your cancer and other conditions you already have, as long as you didn't go abroad specifically for that treatment.

- Each country's healthcare system is different so your GHIC 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.
- Some countries may ask you to pay for the cost upfront but you can claim the money back later. You will only be refunded for anything covered by your GHIC.
- In some countries, patients are asked to pay a patient contribution called a co-payment. Your GHIC does not cover this but your insurance policy may.
- It won't cover the cost of bringing you or your travelling companions back to the UK.
- To apply or find out more about the UK GHIC, visit www.ghic.org.uk or call 0300 330 1350.

Travel insurance

If you're travelling abroad, it's important 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.

If you're travelling in Europe, it can also cover the cost of any medical treatment that isn't covered by the UK GHIC. 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 a GHIC.

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.

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

Yes, it might do. 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. And some companies might not insure you if you've been diagnosed with cancer.

However lots of companies will and most men can find insurance after shopping around. You may be asked to provide a letter from your doctor saying you're fit to travel. Your doctor may charge you for this.

Some companies may offer insurance that doesn't cover your cancer, which means you'll have to cover the cost of anything related to your cancer. This kind of cover could cost you a lot of money if your cancer causes you any problems while you're away. For example, if your cancer has spread to your bones and you fall over and break a bone, this could be because your cancer has made your bones weaker. So your insurer may refuse to cover you for this.



It's good to know that it's now a bit easier to get insurance, as we've found it difficult in the past.

A personal experience

Top travel tip

Shop around to get the best deal before buying. You don't have to accept the insurance offered by the company who provide the holiday.

Where can I get travel insurance?

You can get travel insurance from the following places.

- **General travel insurance providers**
General travel insurance providers are often the cheapest but sometimes 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 travel insurance providers**

Some specialist providers offer 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.

Top travel tip

Check if you already have travel insurance under a different policy. Some banks include cover with your bank account. It may not cover you for everything or there may be an age restriction, so check the policy details to find out if you need extra cover.

Can I arrange my travel insurance online?

Yes. You can look for insurance companies or brokers and buy travel insurance online. Some insurers are only available online, so looking online might offer you a greater selection to choose from. This can help you shop around for the best deal.

You will usually need to complete an online medical screening or, in some cases, speak to someone on the phone before your insurance is approved. This is because they'll want to be clear about your medical history and current health.

You can also arrange travel insurance by visiting a travel insurance provider, for example your bank, or by telephone.

What policy is right for me?

There are many different policies so it's important to pick the right one for you. Lots of things might affect the cover you need, including:

- where you're going
- how long you're staying
- what you'll be doing
- how often you travel.

For example, a single trip policy is best if you're only planning one trip that year. If you're travelling outside of Europe, you'll need worldwide cover which can be more expensive than European cover. This is because medical treatment usually costs more in non-EU countries.

Different insurers have different rules about what countries are covered under European cover, so always check if your destination is included. Some policies don't include cover for cruises or certain activities, so you may need to buy extra cover for those.

What questions will the insurance company ask me?

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
- any recent planned or unplanned hospital stays
- 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 you to fill in a questionnaire about your health. You can ask your doctor for a letter but there may be a charge.

Top travel tip

Be honest and open about your medical history or you may not be fully covered. Tell the insurance company about any changes (even minor ones) to your health between the time you accepted the policy and going on your trip. This includes annual insurance policies. If you don't tell your insurer, your policy may not be valid.



I always make sure my travel insurance company is kept up to date about my health so that I know I'll be covered.

A personal experience

Will my travel insurance be expensive?

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 if you've 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. The type of holiday might also affect the price. For example, cover for cruise holidays is more expensive because it can be harder to get medical treatment.

In general, prices go down the longer your cancer has been under control. So if you have recently been diagnosed, have just had or are currently having treatment, you may pay more. Policies that don't cover treatment related to your cancer may be cheaper. Some men consider doing this if they feel their cancer is unlikely to cause any problems while they're away. But this is a risk and could cost a lot of money if you do need treatment for any problems related to your cancer.

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.

What should I ask the insurance company?

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 and exclude?
- 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?

What if I can't find suitable travel insurance?

If you're struggling to find insurance, give yourself more time to shop around and find quotes. Most men do find suitable cover, but you may need to try several different companies.

Look for insurers who specialise in providing cover for people with cancer. They know every case is different and will look at you as an individual. It can be difficult to answer the same questions lots of times so you may want a friend or relative there to help.

If you still can't find insurance, you could try changing your travel plans. For example, you may find cheaper cover for a different country where medical treatment may cost less.

Do you have 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

Tips for finding travel insurance

- Look up the cost of insurance before booking your trip and check if your quotes include cover for your cancer. Some destinations are more expensive than others.
- Arrange your insurance as soon as possible after you book your holiday, so that you're covered if you need to cancel your trip.
- Get quotes from both general and specialist companies.
- Use online comparison websites to compare quotes from different insurers. The cheapest may not cover all your needs, so always check the details of the policy.
- Check the small print. Make sure you know exactly what you are and aren't covered for.
- If you attend a local cancer support group, ask around to see if anyone can recommend an insurance company.
- Have all the information and dates you might need to hand to help you answer questions from insurance providers.

Things to do before my trip



Speak to your doctor or nurse before planning your trip. Ask if it's safe for you to travel and if you'll need any vaccinations.



Buy your travel insurance – leaving it until later could mean you aren't covered if you have to cancel your trip.



Arrange to collect enough medicines and medical equipment for your trip, including spares.

7 weeks before

9 weeks before



Start looking for travel insurance. Shop around to find the best deal.

8 weeks before

Book your holiday.



Get any vaccinations you need.

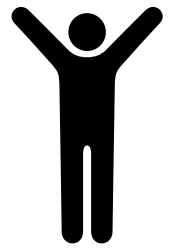
Leave yourself plenty of time.
You might want to do things in a different order.



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



Print or save electronic copies of important travel documents.



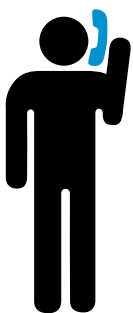
Enjoy your holiday

5 weeks before

4 weeks before

2 weeks before

1 week before



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



Get all the documents you need (GHIC, export licence, doctor's letters, translated medical documents).



Write down any contact details you might need while you're away.

Start packing.



Looking after myself while I'm away

While you're on holiday, you should:

- take extra care of your health
- give yourself some time to rest when you need it
- avoid lots of activity or heavy lifting 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 that feel comfortable
- avoiding sitting with your legs crossed
- drinking plenty of water or non-alcoholic drinks
- reserving an aisle seat or paying extra for a seat with more leg room if you can afford it
- getting up and walking around every hour, if it is safe to do so
- wearing compression socks (ask your doctor if you'll need these).

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 on all bare skin (SPF30 or above)
- 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. Some countries, for example 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 this by:

- drinking clean or sealed bottled 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.

For more ideas and practical tips to help manage symptoms and side effects of prostate cancer and its treatment, visit our interactive online guides at **prostatecanceruk.org/guides**

More information

Association of British Insurers (ABI)

www.abi.org.uk

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

British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA)

www.biba.org.uk

Telephone: 0370 950 1790

Explains how insurance works and helps you find your nearest broker.

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org

Telephone: 0808 800 4040

Information on planning your holiday, getting travel insurance and a list of insurance companies that provide cover for people with cancer.

Civil Aviation Authority

www.caa.co.uk/passengers

Information and advice about airline requirements and travel-related problems.

Department of Health and Social Care

www.gov.uk/dh

Telephone: 020 7210 4850

Information about travelling safely and taking care of your health while overseas.

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

www.gov.uk/fcdo

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

Heathrow Airport

www.heathrow.com

Telephone: 0844 335 1801

Information and advice about services for people who need special assistance.

Home Office Drugs Branch

www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs

Telephone: 020 7035 6330

Information about controlled drugs and getting an export or import licence for your medicine.

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 808 0000

Advice on planning a trip and getting insurance.

NHS website

www.nhs.uk

Information about travelling with cancer and getting healthcare abroad.

Travel Health Pro

www.travelhealthpro.org.uk

Travel health information for all countries, and a list of vaccinations you may need.

UK Global Health Insurance Card (UK GHIC)

www.ghic.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 330 1350

Information about the card and how to get one.

About us

Prostate Cancer UK has a simple ambition: to stop men dying from prostate cancer – by driving improvements in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and support.



This fact sheet is part of the Tool Kit. You can order more 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 to produce this fact sheet are available at **prostatecanceruk.org**

This publication was written and edited by: our Health Information team.

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- Our Specialist Nurses
- Our volunteers.

Tell us what you think

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

yourfeedback@prostatecanceruk.org



**Speak to our
Specialist Nurses**

0800 074 8383*

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, over 47,000 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** or text **PROSTATE** to **70004**[†].

There are many other ways to support us. For more details please visit **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



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t Follow us on Twitter: **@ProstateUK**

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Call our Specialist Nurses from Monday to Friday 9am - 6pm, Wednesday 10am - 8pm

* Calls are recorded for training purposes only.
Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Prostate Cancer UK.

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