

If You Plan to Travel

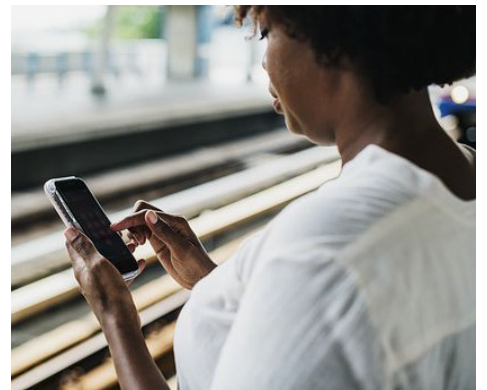
For congenital heart patients

This section of the Congenital Heart Conditions notebook details what to think about if you plan to travel.

Plan Ahead

If you are thinking about taking a trip, either in the U.S. or to another country, plan ahead:

- If you have any questions about your travel plans and how it may affect your heart, please contact your Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD) care team.
- If you take any medicines, make sure you have refills ready before you leave on your trip.
- Ask your care team how to handle any environmental factors that could affect how your heart works (see “Environmental Factors and Your Heart” on page 2).
- If you have had a recent procedure, please ask your ACHD care team about how soon you can travel.
- In case you need to see a congenital cardiologist while you are on your trip, know how to find one.
- It may be important to make sure you have vaccines updated before you take your trip. Please check with your primary care provider (PCP) or travel clinic.



Know how to find a heart doctor while you are on your trip.

Medicines and Travel

- You may need extra medicines or vaccines for some travel. Be sure to tell your PCP or travel clinic of any heart medicines you may be taking. It is important to avoid any drug interactions.

- Anticoagulant medicines such as warfarin (Coumadin) and apixaban (Eliquis) can increase your risk for bleeding. Keep this in mind if you plan on any activities while you are on your trip. Take preventive measures to avoid cuts and scrapes.

Environmental Factors and Your Heart

- **High elevations:** Spending too much time at high elevations, where there is less oxygen in the air, might affect your heart. Please call the ACHD nurse if you have any questions about this.
- **Sun:** Sunscreen is vital for everyone. We strongly advise SPF 30 or higher for patients who recently had a *sternotomy* (surgery through the sternum, or breast bone). Too much sun can make incision lines darker.
- **Swimming:** If you recently had a sternotomy, do not go swimming or immerse your body in water until your doctor says it is OK.
- **Heat and cold:** Getting too hot or too cold can affect your blood pressure. Too much heat can cause dehydration. Please ask your nurse about how to best prepare and pack for high or low temperatures.
- **Scuba diving:** Please talk with your ACHD team before your trip if you have any questions about how scuba diving might affect your heart.

Medical Care on Your Trip

- There are many adult congenital heart centers in the U.S. and Canada. The Adult Congenital Heart Association has a directory on their website: www.achaheart.org
- If you travel outside the U.S., the Adult Congenital Heart Association website has a map and directory of adult congenital heart centers worldwide: www.achaheart.org/media/2137/achatraveldirectory12edpf.pdf
- If you need urgent care while traveling and a care provider needs to know more about your heart history, have them call UWMC's Nurse Line at 206.744.2500. They should ask to page the ACHD provider on call.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Heart Institute Adult
Congenital Heart Disease
Program: 206.598.1764