Travel With Cancer

A getaway might be just what the doctor ordered.

June 14, 2021 By Kate Ferguson

Taking a trip is not automatically off-limits just because you're being treated for cancer or have recently completed treatment—even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Short or long breaks can help support and speed your recovery. And for people with advanced cancer, travel is often high on their bucket list.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can safely travel within the United States, and even some international destinations are low risk. While cancer and its treatment may impair immunity, especially at certain times, such as during chemotherapy, many people in treatment can travel safely.

Talk with your doctors. Ask members of your care team how they feel about you traveling. Ask how to safeguard your health—taking into account COVID-19 protocols and other precautions—what amount of meds to take and how to fill prescriptions while you are away.

Consider brief trips. These may be best as your body recovers from treatment. For example, short-term cancer retreats can provide healing benefits for those with cancer as well as for survivors, caregivers and family members.

Determine what you need. Summarize your treatment plan. Include a list of medications and requirements for storing them as well as any allergies and special equipment or protective items you might need, such as medical-grade masks and manufacturers' cards for devices implanted in your body. Pack a copy of your medical records with contact information in the event of an emergency. Flying? Ask the airline what you can carry on board.

Maximize comfort. For short distances, travel by train or car can be more comfortable and relaxing than flying. Think reclining seats, more legroom and the option to take rest breaks and stay at places along the way.

Take advantage of passenger services. For example, if you're flying, ask about priority boarding, and call the TSA Cares helpline toll-free (855-787-2227) to find out about alternative screening options.

6 Travel Tips

1. Talk with your care team about safety and timing.
2. Short-term trips may be better during recovery.
3. List all the key medical items you'll be taking.
4. Carry a copy of your health records with you. Include contact info in case of an emergency.
5. For the most comfort during short trips, travel either by train or by car.
6. Use passenger support services when available.

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