



Planes, Trains and Automobiles:

TIPS FOR TRAVELING WHILE ON CHEMOTHERAPY

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The sun is out and people are thinking about summer travel plans – for reunions, to celebrate the end of treatment or to take that special trip. We encourage people who are on chemotherapy to travel if they wish, but there are some considerations to keep in mind to help ensure a safe and enjoyable trip.

FIRST CONSIDERATION IS TIMING Discuss this with your oncology team so you don't schedule a trip during your treatment time/dates. Your team can also help you plan the best time to travel considering your immune system. Chemotherapy often suppresses a person's immune system making them more prone to infection. If blood counts are too low, being on a crowded airplane is not a good idea.

If you do travel when immunocompromised, plan on having a mask available to use when in crowded areas such as a plane. During this time, hand washing and having hand sanitizer available is very important. Depending on your destination, your provider may give you a prescription for antibiotics just in case you get an infection. Plan to avoid friends and family who have infections.

ENERGY! Think of how you are feeling and how much energy you have. If you know you get tired in the afternoon, plan for rest periods; scheduling a hike in the afternoon might not be enjoyable if you are too tired. When planning to go out at night, a rest period during the day can help ensure you have more energy for evening dancing. A wheelchair might be helpful if you have to walk a long distance for sightseeing or that grandchild's graduation. Check into having a wheelchair rented when you arrive at your destination or to travel with you. Wheelchair use can also impact going through airport security.

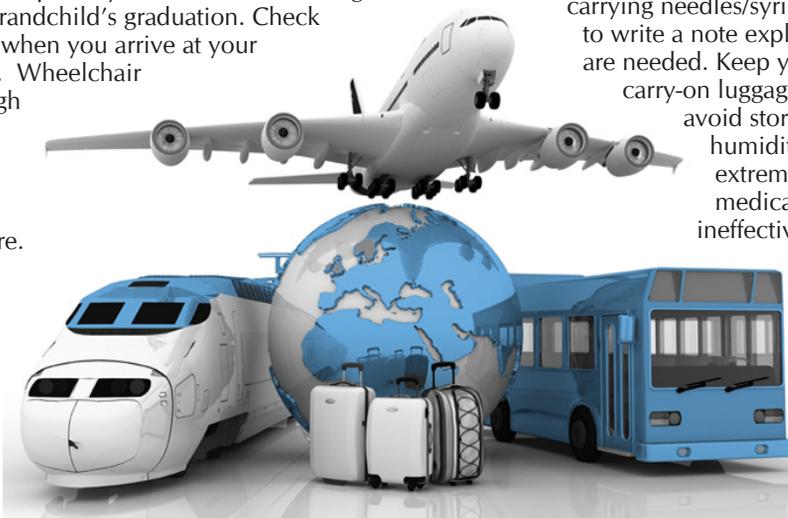
EAT, DRINK & BE MERRY! Try to eat freshly prepared food at the appropriately cooked temperature. Avoid buffets and salad bars since you don't know how long the food has been set out and who has touched it. Avoid raw/undercooked fish, meat and eggs. If you get fresh fruits and veggies – make sure they are washed well. Dirt and bacteria are easy to hide on lettuce and other leafy vegetables. When planning to go out for dinner,

take an anti-nausea medication if you think you will be nauseated. Having a little alcohol will probably not be a problem – but discuss this with your provider first. It also may not taste good to you. Be cautious when drinking water where you suspect it may not be totally clean. Plan to drink bottled water and don't use ice in your drinks!

PACK FOR THE TRIP Pack comfortable shoes and clothing that can be layered - essential for temperature fluctuations. Sunscreen and hats are important, especially when in a sunny climate to prevent sunburn. Your skin is often more sensitive to sun while on chemotherapy.

MEDICATIONS Have a list of all your medications along with the dosage and times you take them. Remember to take the pills you might rarely use, like anti-nausea or antidiarrheal medicines. Take medication in the original bottles with your name and instructions on them to prevent confusion and to show customs officials. Check to be sure you will have enough pills and a few to spare for the time you are gone – be sure to get meds refilled if needed. You can still fill your pill box on a daily basis for convenience.

If you use medicinal marijuana, make sure you have your green card to verify your medical need. When carrying needles/syringes, ask your provider to write a note explaining why the supplies are needed. Keep your medications in carry-on luggage. When traveling, avoid storing medications in high humidity and/or temperature extremes to prevent the medication from becoming ineffective. Medicines should not be stored in the glove compartment of the car. Check the correct temperature for storage of medications and insulin. Don't forget your blood glucose monitor and testing strips.



TRAVELING WHILE ON CHEMOTHERAPY *continued next page*

ANNUAL REPORT 2013

By Renee Yanke, ARNP, MN, AOCN
Cancer Program Manager

In 2013 WGH's Cancer Program spent time assessing community needs and current practice of cancer treatment on Whidbey Island. According to the Community Health Advisory Board (CHAB) health survey, the primary health concerns in the community are obesity and the development of diabetes. At the same time, the American Cancer Society provided information about the links between obesity and diabetes to the increased risk of breast and colon cancer as well as other cancers. Therefore, Whidbey General's prevention programs focused on the importance of overall good health – to prevent obesity and diabetes. In 2014, we will continue this journey helping people understand the link between healthy lifestyle choices and risk of cancer. We were at the

Relay for Life in May and, for the first time, jointly sponsored a triple site skin cancer screening in June in Oak Harbor, Coupeville and Freeland. Look for us at the Whidbey Island Fair in July!

TRAVELING WHILE ON CHEMOTHERAPY *continued*

INFORMATION JUST IN CASE Request a copy of your recent office notes or have your provider give a written overview of your health condition, medications, treatment plan and allergies so you can share that information if you need emergency care while traveling. Include contact information for the emergency staff so they are able to contact your provider at home. If you have an implanted port for medications, take the card you received from the surgeon, so other hospitals will know what is needed to flush it appropriately. If you received a Huber port needle after your surgery – take that with you in case it is needed.

If you plan to get some treatment while you are traveling, contact the doctor's office or clinic well in advance of your treatment to set up appointments. Confirm the insurance will cover the care and the clinic/office will have the medication available. You will probably have to schedule an appointment with the doctor there to check on you and make sure you can be treated.

PLANE TRAIN OR AUTOMOBILE Consider that you may have a hard time traveling in airplanes with the change in air pressure. Also, some people are at higher risk for blood clots if they sit in one place for several hours. Plan to get up and move around or do leg exercises every hour to prevent blood clots from forming. Check with your provider if airplane travel is safe with your condition.

TRAVEL INSURANCE Sometimes travel insurance is helpful. When booking your arrangements ask about the cost and limitations of the insurance. Clarify the kind of medical help/care you can expect to receive while gone, the type and amount for travel assistance to return home in an emergency, and if tickets can be refunded if the trip is canceled. Some travel insurance will provide a nurse and escort for the trip home, and other insurance will not allow refunding of a ticket if you suspect you might need to cancel. These are important points to know.

Depending upon your trip, you may not need all of these tips. They are helpful for most people who travel not just for people on chemotherapy or with cancer. For an easy checklist, go to the Whidbey General website under Cancer Care and choose Travel Tips. Most of all, remember to relax and enjoy the trip. Bring pictures back to show your clinic staff—they all love to hear about your adventures!

Resources: www.cancer.net. Traveling with cancer
www.Carepages.com. Cancer and Travel precautions

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

Thanks to generous community support, fundraising for the breast MRI scan and biopsy system was completed in 2013. Breast MRIs are increasingly valuable in providing excellent breast cancer care and we are thrilled to no longer have to send people off island for this.

The Meditech Electronic Medical Record was a huge part of the hospital's cancer program in 2013. The electronic availability has enhanced our tumor board meetings by having more access to the electronic record for information and discussion.

The full Annual Report can be found online, under Cancer Care. Learn about studies that compared our population with national trends:

- Types of colon cancer found on Whidbey, and the corresponding treatment.
- The comparison between the National Cancer Cooperative network recommended treatments and actual practice on Whidbey Island.

In 2014 we look forward to continued growth with the addition of a fourth surgeon, Dr. John Hassapis and the expansion of our Cancer Navigation program. Whidbey has always embraced the idea that survivorship starts with diagnosis. Look for updates on the next steps in our Survivorship program.

WEB PAGE INFORMATION

whidbeygen.org >
Cancer Care