

Travel and prostate cancer



In this fact sheet:

- How can I prepare for my trip?
- Buying travel insurance
- What do I need to think about while I am away?
- More information
- About us

This fact sheet is for men with prostate cancer who are thinking about going on holiday in the UK or abroad. We've included tips to help you prepare for your trip and guidance on how to arrange travel insurance. But we don't support or recommend any one insurance company. Your partner and family might also want to read this so they can understand the issues.

How can I prepare for my trip?

Speak to your doctor or nurse

It's a good idea to talk to your doctor or nurse about how travel plans might affect your medical treatment. They may be able to suggest when is good for you to travel, and help you think about where to go and how long to go away for.

If you're not sure how your diagnosis and treatment could affect your travel plans, why not speak to a Specialist Nurse on our confidential helpline?



Think about how you are feeling

The way you're feeling could affect your travel plans. Your cancer or treatment may make you feel tired or sick. You may need to urinate more often and some treatments (for example,

radiotherapy) can make you more sensitive to the sun. These things should not stop you from travelling, but they might affect where you go and what sort of things you do while you're away. They may also affect how long you go away for and what you need to take with you.

Think about your medication

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

- Make sure you've got enough medicine for your whole stay – and a bit extra in case of delays or emergencies.
- Ask your doctor for a letter saying what your medicines are for. This might come in handy at the airport or while you're travelling.
- Keep a list of the proper names (not just the brand names) and doses of your medicines in case you need to get more.
- Keep your medicines in their labelled containers.

Travel top tip

Some medicines (for example, strong pain-relieving drugs) can't be taken abroad without a doctor's letter. Others might be legal in the UK but restricted in other countries. Make sure your medicine is legal where you are going. You can check this with the Embassy or High Commission of the country you are visiting (see page 9).



You cannot take more than a certain amount of some medicines outside of the UK. These are called controlled drugs and may include strong pain-relieving drugs. The limit is usually around three months' supply. If you need to take more than this, you should apply for a home office export licence at least two weeks before you plan to travel. You can download a form online at **www.homeoffice.gov.uk** or by calling 020 7035 4848.

Transporting your medicine

- Some airlines have special rules about transporting prescription medicines. For example, you may not be able to travel with some medicines in your hand luggage. Or, you might have to check them in beforehand. Before you travel, check whether you need to make any special arrangements for transporting your medicine.
- If you need a letter or licence to travel with your medicine, keep it in your hand luggage together with the medicine in its original packaging.
- If any of your medicines need to be kept cool, carry them in a cool bag. Make sure there is a fridge to store them in at your destination.
- If you pack medicines in your suitcase, check whether hot or cold temperatures can damage them. Tell the check-in staff at the airport about this so they can make sure your suitcase is stored at the right temperature.

Find out if you need any vaccinations

You may need to have vaccinations before you travel. Check what you might need on **www.nathnac.org** or by asking your practice nurse. And make sure you do this at least six weeks before you go away.

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 are taking.

Think about practical things

- Having cancer increases your risk of getting a blood clot. So do treatments like chemotherapy, surgery and hormone therapy. Flying might not be safe for you, so check with your doctor before booking any long haul flights.
- Carry information about your condition, medicines and treatments in case you need to see a doctor while you're away.
- If you're travelling to a non-English speaking country, it might be a good idea to have 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, ask your travel company to sort this out before you travel.
- If you have urinary problems and use pads, make sure you pack enough for your trip and a few extra in case of delays.
- Pack extra pads and medicine in your hand luggage in case your suitcase gets lost.
- If you use a catheter:
 - take a spare catheter with you
 - take plenty of extra drainage bags or catheter valves
 - speak to your specialist nurse about caring for your catheter while you're away
 - ask your doctor for a letter that explains what your equipment is for. This is called a medical validation certificate and it might make things easier if customs officials decide to search your bag.
- If you've had brachytherapy (a type of treatment where radioactive seeds are implanted into the prostate), you could set off airport radiation sensors. Ask your doctor for an advice card saying you've had treatment



with internal radiation. Take this with you, especially when travelling by air. Read our Tool Kit fact sheet **Permanent seed brachytherapy**, if you want to know more about this treatment.

Apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)



If you are travelling to a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland, make sure you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EEA is made up of the 26 European Union (EU) countries and Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

Travel top tip

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

Things you should know about the EHIC

- It replaces the old E111 form.
- Each person travelling, including children, should have their own EHIC.
- It covers the cost of state healthcare only.
- It allows you to have medical treatment in most European countries for free, or at a lower cost. You may have to pay for some things at the time but you can claim the money back later.
- It covers the cost of medical treatment that becomes necessary during your trip, because of either illness or an accident. It will cover the cost of treatment for your cancer and other conditions you already have, as long as you did not go abroad specifically for that treatment.

- It does not always cover the full cost of treatment and it does not cover everything. For example, the EHIC won't pay for the cost of bringing you or your travelling companions back to the UK.

Each country's healthcare system is slightly different. Therefore, your EHIC might not cover everything that would be free on the NHS. But you should be able to get the same treatment as a resident of the country you're visiting.

To apply for an EHIC:

- visit www.ehic.org.uk, or
- call 0300 330 1350

To find out more about getting medical treatment in the EEA, read the Department of Health booklet **Health Advice for Travellers**. You can get a copy of this booklet by calling 0207 210 4850. You can also download a copy from the Department of Health website at www.dh.gov.uk

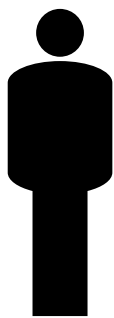
Arrange travel insurance if you are going abroad

If you are travelling abroad, it's a good idea to buy travel insurance before your trip. Travel insurance covers the cost of things that go wrong while you're away. For example, you might lose your suitcase or have to cancel your holiday. It can also cover the cost of any medical treatment that isn't covered by the EHIC, so it's very important to get travel insurance even if you're staying in Europe.

Some insurance companies will only cover you if you have an EHIC.

You don't need travel insurance for medical costs if you travel in the UK. UK citizens travelling in the UK can have free medical treatment at the nearest hospital.

Things to do before your trip



Book your holiday

8 weeks before



Start looking for travel insurance. This might take longer than you expect. Some men do this even before booking a holiday.

7 weeks before



Get any vaccinations you need.



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

6 weeks before

5 weeks before

Arrange your Home Office export licence if you need one.



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



Check that everyone who is travelling has a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).



Ask your doctor or nurse for any letters you might need.



Book and confirm all the details of your travel insurance policy.

Go on holiday

4 weeks before

3 weeks before

2 weeks before

1 week before

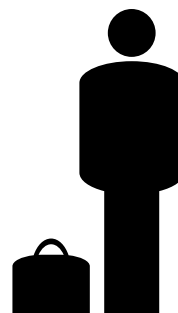


If you have a disability or special food needs, ask your travel company to make the right arrangements for you for your journey.

Get any important medical documents translated.



Start packing.



Buying travel insurance

Sorting out 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 for your situation.

Q. Will having prostate cancer make it harder for me to get travel insurance?

A. Yes. This is because insurers think you are more likely to need medical treatment while you're on holiday, or to cancel your trip at the last minute.

If you're having treatment, have been treated recently, or have advanced or recurrent cancer, it may be very hard to find travel insurance. Most men are able to find insurance cover after shopping around a little. But some men decide to accept travel insurance that does not cover everything related to their cancer.

If you're not having treatment or if your cancer is under control, your insurance may still cost more than if you hadn't been diagnosed.

Q. Where can I get travel insurance?

A. Insurance companies have different rules for working out who they insure. Some companies will not insure you if you've been diagnosed with cancer. Others may do if you provide a letter from your doctor saying that you are fit to travel. Your stage of cancer and treatment will affect where you can get travel insurance and how much it costs. You can look into the following options.

- **High street travel insurance companies**
These companies are generally cheapest but only insure you for certain things or if you meet certain criteria. For example, your insurance may not cover medical treatment and emergencies related to your cancer. Or they might have time limits on how soon

they will insure you to travel after treatment. Check the policy details to make sure you are completely covered for your trip.

- **Specialist companies**

These companies provide travel insurance for people with medical problems, including cancer. Their prices vary a lot and some specialist insurance policies can be very expensive. Take care to check whether the policy includes treatment related to your cancer before you buy it.

- **Insurance brokers**

These are people who can give advice and arrange your travel insurance for you. Brokers shop around many companies to find the best deal for you. They can make getting travel insurance easier and sometimes offer you a better price than individual companies. But, they do charge a service fee.

Macmillan Cancer Support provides a list of travel insurance companies and brokers that might be useful on www.macmillan.org.uk. This list is updated every six months but insurance companies change their policies often, so you may want to look into other companies as well.

Travel top tip

Shop around to make sure you get the best deal for your situation.

Q. Can I arrange my travel insurance online?

A. The internet is a good place to start looking for insurance companies and brokers. You may get a quote online but you will usually need to speak to someone before your insurance is approved. This is because the company or broker will want to be very clear about your medical history and current health if you've been diagnosed with cancer.

Q. What questions will the insurance company ask me?

- A.** The insurance company will ask you a few things before they decide on the type of cover they can provide and how much it will cost. They will ask about your age, marital status and occupation. They might also ask for detailed information about your trip, medical history and your 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.

They will also want to know about all of your other medical treatments or any other medical conditions. This includes conditions that are not related to your cancer such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Some insurance companies use a medical advisor to work out your insurance cover and how much it should cost. They might want a doctor's letter or ask your doctor to fill in a questionnaire about your health. Some insurance companies will charge you if they have to contact your doctor, so it might be better to sort this out yourself.

Travel top tip

Tell the insurance company about your prostate cancer and any other health problems you have. If you don't, they might not pay for medical treatment or the cost of getting you home if you become unwell on holiday. You should also tell the insurance company if there are any changes to your health between the time you accepted the policy and going on your trip. This includes annual insurance policies.

Q. Will my travel insurance be expensive?

- A.** The amount you pay (the premium) is likely to be higher than if you had not been diagnosed with prostate cancer. The amount you have to pay when you make a claim (the excess) could also be higher. In general, prices go down the longer your cancer has been under control. This means that if you're currently having treatment (including watchful waiting and active surveillance), or if you've been treated recently, you may pay more. Travel insurance could be very expensive if you have advanced or recurrent cancer.

The cost of travel insurance and the kind of cover you get can vary quite a lot. It might cost less if you choose a policy that doesn't cover treatment related to your cancer. You might want to do this if you feel your cancer is unlikely to cause any problems while you are away – but this can be more risky.

Travel top 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 also covered in case you need to come home early, and they need to come with you.

Q. What questions should I ask the insurance company?

- A.** You should ask your insurance company to explain anything you aren't sure about, or if there's anything you haven't understood. You should also make sure you fully understand your policy and what it covers.

Think about asking some of these questions.

- What does the policy include, and what does it not include?
- 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 or fill in a questionnaire? If so, will there be a charge from the insurance company if they contact my doctor?

Tips for finding travel insurance

- Look up the cost of travel insurance before booking your trip as some destinations are more expensive than others.
- Get quotes from high street companies as well as specialist companies.
- Check the small print. Make sure you know exactly what you're covered for, and what you're not covered for.
- If your cancer is unlikely to make you unwell while you're away, you could think about taking out insurance that covers everything except your cancer.
- Tell your insurance company about your prostate cancer and any other medical problems.
- Ask a member of your local cancer support group to recommend an insurance company.

Have you got questions about planning a holiday?

Ask other men about their experiences in our online community. Or, talk to a support volunteer through our peer support service. To access this, call a Specialist Nurse on our confidential helpline.



What do I need to think about while I'm away?

While you're on holiday, you should take extra care of your health. For example:

- avoid strenuous activity that you're not used to
- keep cool 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 you have an emergency.

Help avoid blood clots by making sure you do the following during your flight:

- exercise your legs as much as possible
- wear loose-fitting clothes
- drink plenty of water and other non-alcoholic drinks
- wear compression socks (if your doctor advises you to).

If you've recently had radiotherapy, you might be much more sensitive to the sun.

To protect yourself:

- avoid direct sunlight between 11am and 3pm
- use a strong sunscreen (around SPF30)
- wear loose cotton clothing, as well as a hat and sunglasses.

If you've had chemotherapy or any treatment that might weaken your immune system, take steps to avoid getting infections. For example:

- drink clean water only (boil it first if you are unsure)
- eat properly cooked food (avoid salads and raw vegetables)
- avoid street food and ice in drinks
- peel fruits before you eat them.

Travel top tip

If you have a weak immune system, ask your doctor or nurse to give you some antibiotics for your trip.

More information

Association of British Insurers (ABI)

www.abi.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7600 3333

Provides information about insurance cover, and what to think about when choosing a policy that is right for you.

British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA)

www.biba.org.uk

Telephone: 0870 950 1790

Provides explanations for insurance terms that are hard to understand, and helps you find your nearest broker.

British Red Cross

www.redcross.org.uk

The British Red Cross can provide a driver with a vehicle to help you get around, for example getting to and from the airport. This service is not available in all UK locations.

Cancer Help UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org

Nurse helpline: 0808 800 4040

Cancer Research UK's patient information website provides information about planning your holiday and sorting out travel insurance if you've been diagnosed with cancer.

Department of Health

www.dh.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7210 4850

Provides tips for travelling safely and how to take care of your health in EU and non EU countries.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

www.ehic.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 218 1999

Provides information about the European Health Insurance Card and how to get one.

Heathrow Airport

www.heathrowairport.com

Telephone: 0844 335 1801

Provides information about what services are offered to people with special needs at UK airports.

Home Office Drugs Branch

www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7035 6330

Provides a complete list of controlled drugs and information about how to get an export or import license for your medicine.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

www.gov.uk/fco

Find the London Diplomatic list here. This is a list of Embassies and High Commissions in the UK and their contact details.

Macmillan Cancer Support

www.macmillan.org.uk

Free helpline: 0808 808 0000

Practical, financial and emotional support for people with cancer, their family and friends. Provides useful advice for planning your trip and choosing insurance, as well as a list of travel insurance companies that cover people with cancer.

National Travel Health Network and Centre

www.nathnac.org

Telephone: 020 3447 5943

Provides travel health information about every country in the world, as well as a list of vaccinations you may need before going on holiday.

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

Information about treatments, conditions and lifestyle, and support for carers and a directory of health services in England. Provides important information about travelling with cancer and how to get healthcare abroad.

About us

Prostate Cancer UK fights to help more men survive prostate cancer and enjoy a better life.

This fact sheet is part of the Tool Kit. You can order more Tool Kit fact sheets, including an



A-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 in the production of this fact sheet are available at **prostatecanceruk.org**

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Tell us what you think

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

literature@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, 40,000 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/donations 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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Call our Specialist Nurses from Mon to Fri 9am - 6pm, Wed 10am - 8pm

*Calls are recorded for training purposes only.

Confidentiality is maintained between callers and Prostate Cancer UK.

Prostate Cancer UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1005541) and in Scotland (SC039332). Registered company number 2653887.