

Travelling with medications: A guide

2019 Edition



IAMAT

“Travelling with medication across borders is a timely and complex subject that if not followed correctly can lead to frustrations and delays at international borders.

This guide reviews some of the key issues regarding transporting, packing and obtaining medicines whilst travelling. This is an ideal guide for any traveller who has to carry or obtain medication during their travel.”

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IAMAT

International
Association for
Medical Assistance
to Travelers

► About us

IAMAT's mission is to make the world a healthier place to travel.

We protect the well-being of travellers with up-to-date health and immunization information. We believe that travellers who are well-informed about potential health risks can prevent injuries and illnesses – and stop the spread of infectious diseases.

Our vision is to live in a world where travellers have access to quality medical care no matter who or where they are. Our travel medicine scholarships improve healthcare for travellers and local patients in countries where travel medicine is an emerging specialty.

IAMAT is a registered charity in the USA and Canada. Our work is made possible by generous donations from our members.

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Introduction

One of the most common questions international travellers have – or should have – is:

Can I travel with my medication?

As more of us jet around the world carrying over-the-counter and prescription medication, many travellers are still unaware of, or confused about, restrictions countries place on the import of medication for personal use.

Finding a country's medication laws and regulations is no easy task. Countries independently regulate the import of medicines and many do not have publicly available or clear guidelines.

This guide seeks to answer the most common questions about travelling with medication. Inside, you'll find helpful tips and advice on how to:

- Find out if your medication is regulated
- Travel with regulated medication
- Pack medication safely and securely, and
- Find medication abroad

It also features a checklist of essential steps, quick tips for each chapter, and helpful illustrations.

Please note this guide is intended to complement the advice of your healthcare practitioner and pharmacist.

► DEFINITIONS

Over-the-counter drugs:

Drugs that are available at your local drug store or pharmacy and do not require a prescription.

Prescription drugs:

Drugs that require a medical prescription from a licensed healthcare practitioner to be dispensed.

Controlled substances:

Prescription drugs that are monitored under international treaties and national laws due to their addictive qualities and to prevent them from being obtained illegally. Controlled substances affect the central nervous system and can only be dispensed with a medical prescription from a licensed healthcare practitioner. Most countries place restrictions on the import and export of controlled substances for personal use.

How to navigate medication regulations

Are you unsure if you can travel with your medication? You're not alone.

Finding out whether your medication is restricted or even available at your destination can be challenging. Laws are country-specific and regulations can be hard to find and interpret.

Your medication may be regulated at your destination depending on the substance being imported and the amount being imported.

If you are not in compliance with your destination's regulations your medication could be confiscated, you could be denied entry, or you could be fined or detained. Fortunately, most travellers are able to import their medication without any issues, but being prepared and in compliance with your destination's regulations are key to ensuring you have a trouble-free trip.

This chapter addresses the following:

How much medication am I allowed to bring?

My medication contains a controlled substance.
Can I travel with it?

Do I have to bring any supporting
documentation?

What should I do if I need to bring more
medication than my destination permits?

What should I do if my medication is not
permitted into my destination?

Should I declare my prescription medication?

Can I travel with recreational drugs? What
about CBD?

Can I travel with steroids?

How much medication am I allowed to bring?

It depends. The amount of prescription medication you can take with you varies depending on your destination's regulations. Travellers are typically permitted to bring a 30- to 90-day supply of prescription medication such as high blood pressure medication, anticoagulants, insulin, corticosteroid inhalers, chemotherapy drugs, biologics, or antibiotics. Medication that contains a controlled substance, however, is highly regulated. Countries place strict limitations on the amount and type of controlled medication that can be imported ([see page 7](#) for more information).

To review your destination's medication import regulations, check first with the country's embassy, consulate, Ministry of Health, or national drug administration body (e.g. the Egyptian Drug Authority, the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), the Malaysian National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency). You can also review the [International Narcotics Control Board \(INCB\)](#) website and the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) list of [international regulations on the importation of medicines for personal use](#) for country-specific information.

It's wise to refer to multiple official sources to ascertain a country's medication regulations. Some countries may provide incomplete, inaccessible, or out-of-date information, or enforce their regulations differently at the border. Print copies of your destination's regulations (from multiple official sources if possible) to facilitate security screening and border crossing.

My medication contains a controlled substance. Can I travel with it?

A controlled substance is a drug that is internationally regulated due to its high risk for addiction and misuse. Controlled substances include certain narcotic and psychotropic medications ([see page 8](#)).

Countries place strict limitations on the amount and type of controlled substance that can be imported, but conditions can vary widely. Some countries may allow for a 30-day supply, while others allow only a few days. In some cases, controlled substances may be outright banned from entering the country. For example, Japan strictly prohibits opium, cannabis, and stimulant drugs (amphetamines, methamphetamines) including specific medications for ADD/ADHD

► IS YOUR NARCOTIC OR PSYCHOTROPIC A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE?

Narcotics and **psychotropics** are substances that target the central nervous system and have a psychoactive effect, changing the way you think, feel, or behave. Some of these drugs are placed under international control because they are highly addictive and can be easily misused.

Narcotic substances are psychoactive drugs that have a sleep-inducing effect. These include analgesic (pain-relieving) drugs such as acetaminophen*/oxycodone (Percocet), acetaminophen/hydrocodone (Vicodin), acetaminophen/codeine (Tylenol-Codeine), fentanyl (Actiq, Fentora), hydrocodone (Hysingla), and methadone (Dolophine).

Psychotropic substances include psychoactive drugs, such as sedative-hypnotics, hallucinogens, and central nervous stimulants. These can be used to manage psychiatric and neurological conditions. Examples of controlled psychotropic drugs include amphetamine/dextroamphetamine (Adderall), methylpheniate (Ritalin, Concerta), diazepam (Valium), lorazepam (Ativan), zolpidem (Ambien), and clonazepam (Klonopin).

To find out if your narcotic or psychotropic medication is under international control, check the [International Narcotics Control Board \(INCB\)](#) website and the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) list of [international regulations on the importation of medicines for personal use](#).

**Acetaminophen is the same medication as paracetamol. The trade name acetaminophen (Tylenol) is used in North America, while paracetamol (Panadol) is common in Europe.*

treatment such as Adderall, Dexedrine, and Vyvanse, as well as common over-the-counter medications like Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers. Even with a valid prescription from your general practitioner, these substances are not permitted into Japan.

When importing a controlled substance, you will typically be required to provide documentation from your healthcare practitioner. In some circumstances you may need to apply for a permit or license to export or import controlled substances for personal use.

Check the [International Narcotics Control Board \(INCB\)](#) website and the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) list of [international regulations on the importation of medicines for personal use](#) for country-specific information on controlled substance restrictions.

Many countries currently do not have publicly stated regulations. Where statements are available, they may be vague, out-of-date, or incomplete. If this is the case, check with your destination's embassy, consulate, Ministry of Health or national drug administration organization for advice. Refer to multiple

sources and ask for written confirmation of their regulations to facilitate border crossing.

Do I have to bring any supporting documentation?

Yes. No matter where you travel, always bring copies of your original prescription as well as a letter from your healthcare practitioner that includes:

- Your name (the same as on your passport) and dates of your trip
- Your healthcare practitioner's name and contact information
- A list of all medication and dosage (including the generic name as brand names may differ across countries)
- Reasons for taking the medication, and
- A list of medical supplies and equipment, if applicable

If possible, have this letter translated into the language understood at your destination. You may be asked to show this documentation at security and customs to validate that your medication is for personal use. Travellers carrying medication containing a controlled

► HOW ARE MEDICATIONS REGULATED?

Medications are regulated according to...

1. **Substance:** Medications containing a controlled substance are highly regulated and may be banned or restricted.
2. **Amount:** Typically you can bring a 30- to 90-day supply of prescription medication. Controlled substances often have stricter limitations.
3. **Destination:** Regulations vary by country.

substance or more medication than what is typically permitted may be required to provide this documentation. This information is also useful in case you need a consultation with a doctor or pharmacist at your destination.

You should also bring copies of your destination's medication regulations. This can help you demonstrate to security and customs officials that you are in compliance with their country's regulations.

What should I do if I need to bring more medication than my destination permits?

If you need to bring more medication than your destination allows, you may need to apply for a permit or license to carry the required amount. A permit or license may be required from your home country to export the medication and/ or from your destination country to import the medication.

It is also possible to travel with the allowable limit and obtain additional medication at your destination. Ask your pharmacist or contact a doctor at your destination before your trip to ensure your medication is available and can be prescribed to you. It is very important to exercise caution when buying medication abroad.

► See: [*How to find medication abroad.*](#)

Do not mail or courier medication. Medication may be lost or delayed during transit, confiscated at the border, or become damaged, reducing its potency and efficacy. In addition, your home country or destination country may require a license or permit to mail or courier your medication.

► See: [*How to pack medication for travel.*](#)

TRAVELLING with a CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

Check your destination's regulations on the INCB or ISTM to see if you can travel with your controlled medication

Destination country listed

Destination country not listed

Make sure you are in compliance with your destination's regulations

Check your destination's embassy, federal drug administration body, or ministry of health for additional details

I am in compliance

I need to bring more than the amount permitted

My medication is restricted at my destination

Bring all supporting documentation (letter from your doctor and copy of prescription) and pack medication safely. Apply for an import license/permit if required.

Contact your destination's embassy for additional assistance. You may need to apply for an import license/permit.

Contact your healthcare practitioner to get an alternative medication. Ensure it can be imported into your destination and is available in case you need a refill.

What should I do if my medication is not permitted into my destination?

If your prescription medication is prohibited at your destination, do not attempt to travel with it. Contact your healthcare practitioner before you travel to see if there is a suitable alternative you can take instead. Make sure you can travel with your alternate medication, that it is available at your destination, and can be prescribed to you in case you need a refill.

Should I declare my prescription medication?

You should always be prepared to declare your prescription medication to a customs official.

The rules for declaring medication differ at every border. However, you should always declare medication that contains a controlled substance. Make sure you have sufficient supporting documentation, including a letter from your healthcare practitioner, a copy of your prescription, and if required, an import permit or license to facilitate the process of declaring your medication.

If you are travelling with prescription medication that does not contain a controlled substance, security officials may ask to see your supporting documentation (letter from your healthcare practitioner and prescription). Always be prepared to present these items and declare them if asked.

It might seem daunting to declare your prescription medication but if you don't, you can be at risk of prosecution for violation of your destination's medication import laws and regulations. For example, if you are found to be in possession of a controlled substance without a medical prescription, your medication may be seized by customs officials and you can be denied entry.

When passing through security at the airport, you should always declare liquid medication and medical supplies (such as syringes, oxygen concentrators, and pacemakers) to security officials. Where available, use the Family/Special Needs security line. Security officials in these lines are trained to provide additional assistance.

Can I travel with recreational drugs?

What about CBD?

It is illegal to travel with recreational drugs (substances used without medical supervision, such as cannabis, heroin, cocaine, LSD, and MDMA).

Even if you are travelling to a country or from a country that has legalized or decriminalized cannabis, transporting it across an international border is illegal. Do not travel internationally with cannabis used for medical purposes and cannabis-infused products such as cannabidiol (CBD) since the rules surrounding the legality of CBD and other cannabis-infused products may differ by country or within a country.

Can I travel with steroids?

It depends. There are two types of steroids – corticosteroids and anabolic steroids. Corticosteroids are drugs typically prescribed by a healthcare practitioner to treat medical problems. These drugs include prednisone, dexamethasone, cortisone, and celestone.

Anabolic steroids or anabolic-androgenic steroids (AAS) are synthetic substances similar to the male sex hormone testosterone. AAS are prescribed by a healthcare practitioner and include stanozolol, androl, nandrolone, and danazol. These drugs are also used recreationally and without medical supervision.

The legal status of AAS medications differs worldwide. They are typically considered a controlled medication, meaning their importation may be regulated. If you are travelling with an AAS, make sure you have a letter from your doctor explaining its use and a copy of your original prescription. Depending on your destination's restrictions, there may be limitations on the amount of AAS you can import.

► QUICK TIPS

- Countries set their own regulations and limits on how much medication travellers can bring for personal use.
- Before your trip, check the legality of travelling with your medication and ensure you are in compliance with your destination's regulations. Check with your destination's embassy, consulate, Ministry of Health, or national drug administration body for details on medication allowances and restrictions. **If your medication is a controlled substance**, check the [International Narcotics Control Board](#) website and the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) list of [international regulations on the importation of medicines for personal use](#). Note country regulations listed by these sources may be incomplete or out-of-date.
- Where possible, check multiple sources for your destination's medication regulations and bring copies of these documents with you to facilitate border crossing.

- Always bring a copy of your prescription and a letter from your healthcare practitioner (preferably translated in the language understood at your destination) to accompany your medication. This will facilitate border crossing and consultation with a doctor at your destination if needed.
- You may be required to apply for a license or permit to import your medication if you are carrying a controlled substance or a quantity over the allowed limit.
- Ask your pharmacist if your medication is available at your destination in case you need a refill. You can also contact the pharmaceutical company or a doctor at your destination to determine if it is prescribed in that country. If your medication is not available, ask your healthcare practitioner if a suitable alternative medication is available.
- Do not travel with recreational drugs.

How to pack medication for travel

Prescription and over-the-counter medication are luggage staples for many of us. But did you know that improperly packing or storing medication can damage it?

Your medication can be exposed to temperature extremes, humidity, and light that can affect its potency and efficacy. Incorrectly packing medication can also draw suspicion from security and customs officials, who may prohibit or delay you from entering their country.

Storing medication correctly can ensure that your medication remains safe and that you are permitted to bring it into your destination.

This chapter addresses the following:

How should I pack my medication for travel?

How should I store my medication in my luggage?

How should I travel with my medical supplies?

How much medication should I pack?

How can I protect my medication from temperature extremes?

Can I mail or travel with medication that is prescribed for another person?

How should I pack my medication for travel?

First, check that you can bring your medication to your destination and that you do not exceed the maximum importation limit.

► See: [*How to navigate medication regulations.*](#)

Pack all medications in their original containers. Prescription medication containers should

include the name of the drug (generic and brand name), dosage, your full name (as on your passport) and your healthcare practitioner's contact information on the label. Your pharmacist can reprint the label if needed.

Do not decant medication into a pill organizer or other container prior to your trip. Although these methods can help you take medication consistently, loose and unlabelled pills can draw suspicion at security and customs. Pack empty pill organizers and fill them once you arrive.

Always carry a copy of your original prescription and a letter from your healthcare practitioner to facilitate declaring your medication at security and customs. This will also aid consultation with a doctor at your destination in case you need a refill.

How should I store my medication in my luggage?

Pack your medication in your carry-on luggage and handbag. Keeping all your medication with you is important in case you need to take it during transit. It can also facilitate the process of declaring your medication to customs and security.

The **DO'S** and **DON'TS** of **PACKING MEDICATION**

DO

Keep medication in its original labelled packaging



DO

Pack medication in your carry-on luggage



DO

Safely store medication sensitive to temperature extremes



DO

Carry medication prescribed for your personal use only



DON'T

Decant medication into an unlabelled container or pill organizer



DON'T

Pack all medication and supplies in checked luggage



DON'T

Leave medication in a hot car or expose it to freezing temperatures



DON'T

Mail or courier medication internationally or carry medication for someone else



Do not pack medication in your checked luggage since it can get stolen, lost in transit, or delayed. The extreme cold temperatures in the aircraft cargo hold can also damage your medication.

How should I travel with my medical supplies?

If you are travelling with medical supplies or devices such as syringes or an oxygen concentrator, contact your transit company (e.g. airline, cruise line) in advance to determine if you can use them onboard.

Medication and medical supplies (including liquids, gels, aerosols, and syringes) are exempt from airport security regulations provided you have the appropriate documentation to prove they are medically necessary.

When passing through security at the airport, declare liquid medication and medical supplies (such as syringes, oxygen concentrators, and pacemakers) to screening officials. Where available, use the Family/Special Needs security line. Security officials in these lines are trained to provide additional assistance. Always carry a letter from your healthcare practitioner that includes your name, your practitioner's name,

and details of your health condition, medication, and all necessary supplies or devices to facilitate security screening.

Before you travel, check with your healthcare practitioner or pharmacist that it is safe for you and your medical supplies to pass through security screening equipment. For example, if you have an insulin pump or continuous glucose monitor (CGM) it is safe to pass through a metal detector but not through a full-body scanner with the pump and CGM attached. Do not send the detached pump and CGM through an x-ray machine. Ask the security screening officer to complete a hand search instead.

Make sure you have an adequate supply of backup equipment, repair kits, batteries, and any materials needed for your medical device. It may be difficult to replace or repair the device at your destination.

How much medication should I pack?

Bring enough medication for the duration of your trip, plus an extra supply in case your trip is extended or your medication is lost or stolen. Depending on the length of your trip, take up to twice the amount that is needed. However,

check your destination's regulations regarding the import of medication for personal use. Make sure you are not bringing more medication than is legally permitted for entry.

► See: [*How to navigate medication regulations.*](#)

How can I protect my medication from temperature extremes?

Temperature extremes – both hot and cold – can affect the potency and efficacy of your medication. Most medicines should be stored in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight or heat. Some medications need to be stored under specific conditions, such as at room temperature, kept cool, refrigerated, or frozen.

Read the patient information leaflet or ask your pharmacist to find out if your medication is sensitive to environmental factors and how to properly store your medication during transit and at your destination.

Before you go, contact your transit company and accommodation to determine if appropriate storage is available onboard and during your stay.

To avoid extremely cold temperatures, store your medication in your carry-on luggage during transit. The luggage hold in aircrafts is typically very cold and can damage your medication. Use insulated wallets, packs, or pouches to keep medication at its required temperature in your carry-on luggage.

To avoid exposure to hot temperatures at your destination, store your medication in a cool, dry place at room temperature between 20-25°C / 68-77°F. During the day, take only the amount of medication you need with you. Always avoid storing medication in vehicles or other locations without air conditioning.

Do not take medication if you notice any changes to its appearance or consistency. Consult a pharmacist as soon as possible.

Can I mail or travel with medication that is prescribed for another person?

No. You should only travel with medication that is intended for your personal use. Do not travel with medication that is not prescribed to you or mail medication internationally. Mailed or couriered medication may become damaged,

delayed, or seized by customs officials. Your home country or destination country may also require a license or permit to mail or courier your medication.

For long-term travellers and international assignees, there are services available that can ship medications if needed. For example, [Expatriate Prescription Services](#) can be obtained through co-pay with an employer's benefit plan.

► QUICK TIPS

- Bring enough medication to last the whole trip. Ask your healthcare practitioner for an additional supply in case of an emergency, but make sure you do not bring more than the allowable limit.
- Keep medication in its original packaging. Ensure it is clearly labelled with your full passport name, healthcare practitioner's name, medication generic and brand name, and dosage. Your pharmacist can reprint your medication label if needed.
- Pack your medication in your carry-on luggage and handbag. Do not pack your medication in checked luggage in case it is lost or stolen and to avoid exposure to the extremely cold temperature in the aircraft luggage hold.
- Prescription liquids, gels, and aerosols are exempt from carry-on luggage restrictions but must be declared. Be prepared to show security officials the letter from your healthcare practitioner and original prescription. Opt for Family/Special Needs screening lines where available.

- If you use a medical device or medical supplies (e.g. syringes, oxygen concentrator, or pacemaker), they should be listed in your healthcare practitioner's letter. Before you go, ask your airline or other transportation company if you can use your medical device or supplies onboard.
- If your medication is temperature sensitive, make arrangements for safe storage during transit and at your destination. Use insulated wallets, packs, or pouches (ask your pharmacist for recommendations), and contact your accommodation in advance.
- Do not mail or courier medication internationally.

How to find medication abroad

Finding medication abroad can be a stressful experience, even for the well-prepared traveller.

Whether you need to fill a prescription or pick up over-the-counter medication, travellers can run into issues when they do not know where to find a reputable pharmacy, have difficulty finding a specific or rare medication, or do not speak the same language as the pharmacist.

There are a number of reasons why travellers need to find a pharmacy abroad. Some common scenarios include:

- Medication is lost or stolen
- Not packing enough medication
- The trip is unexpectedly extended or delayed and more medication is needed
- Treatment for an unexpected illness or making changes to an existing prescription
- Not being able to import the full supply of medication due to entry restrictions

Whether you are travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medication, plan for the possibility that you will need to find a reputable pharmacy abroad. You should also be prepared in case your medication is not available or is prescribed in a different dosage.

No matter where you travel, it is important to exercise caution when buying medication: Always ensure that any medication you get is safe and comes from a reliable source.

This chapter addresses the following:

How should I prepare before I go?

Is my prescription medication available at my destination?

Do I need a prescription for my medication at my destination?

How can I find a reputable pharmacy at my destination?

How can I ensure the medication I buy is safe and reliable?

How should I prepare before I go?

Get all your prescription and over-the-counter medicines before your trip. Make an appointment with your healthcare practitioner before you depart to get enough prescription medication for the duration of your trip, plus an extra supply.

Ask your healthcare practitioner to write you a letter that details your prescription medication and bring a copy of your original prescription.

This can help you navigate border crossings or consult with a doctor or pharmacist at your destination if needed.

► See: [*How to navigate medication regulations.*](#)

You should also pack a [first aid kit](#) with an adequate supply of over-the-counter medicines and emergency items such as antibiotic ointments, sterilizing wipes, adhesive bandages (e.g. Band-aids), gauze, and medical tape. These basic medical supplies may be difficult to find at your destination, especially if you are travelling in a rural area.

Is my prescription medication available at my destination?

It depends. The medication you were prescribed back home may not be available, or it may be sold under a different brand name or in a different dosage.

Before you go, do some research online to see if your medication is approved for sale at your destination and if it is available in the dosage or formulation you need. Check your destination's national drug administration body (e.g. the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the

Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (Anvisa)) for a list of approved medicines or guidelines.

If you are unsure, ask your pharmacist for assistance, contact the pharmaceutical company, or contact a doctor at your destination for more information. If your medication is not available, ask your healthcare practitioner about a suitable alternative and make sure you can import it into your destination.

Do I need a prescription for my medication at my destination?

Pharmaceutical regulations and standards vary around the world; even within a country, practices can differ by region. Most pharmacists will require a prescription from a local doctor or a doctor that is licensed to practice in that country. In some circumstances, you may be able to purchase your prescription medication over-the-counter or you may need a prescription for medication you can readily buy over-the-counter back home.

For controlled substances ([see page 8](#)), such as certain narcotic and psychotropic medications (substances that affect the central nervous

system), prescribing practices are highly regulated. For example, in some European countries, opioids are not prescribed by primary care doctors. Instead, you have to see a specialist or have them prescribed through a hospital.

Before you depart, make sure to pack a copy of your original prescription and a letter from your healthcare practitioner to make a consultation with a local doctor or pharmacist easier. Always consult a doctor before taking a new medication or changing your existing medication.

How can I find a reputable pharmacy at my destination?

Depending on your destination, pharmacies may be privately-owned or government-run. They may be stand-alone retailers or part of another facility such as a hospital, shopping centre, or grocery store. The availability and accessibility of pharmacies and medication will differ according to your destination and even within the country. For example, rural areas often have fewer pharmacies and a more limited supply of medication than urban areas.

The most reliable pharmacies are typically associated with university-affiliated hospitals

and clinics. Where possible, opt for large pharmacies in urban areas. Consult a reputable doctor or clinic at your destination for recommendations on reliable local pharmacies.

► See: [Resources](#).

It is also important to always ask to speak to the pharmacist directly. In some countries, it is not a requirement for a trained and licensed pharmacist to be present or dispense medication to the patient (retail staff may be responsible for dispensing medication). Make sure the person dispensing medication to you is a trained pharmacist and can speak in a language you understand.

How can I ensure the medication I buy is safe and reliable?

When purchasing medication abroad, be alert to issues of quality and safety. Avoid purchasing medication from unlicensed pharmacies, street markets or vendors, or online stores. In low- or middle-income countries, the regulation of privately-owned pharmacies may be limited and the quality of medications may vary.

Once you have obtained your medication, take the time to check it is the correct dosage.

You should also check the packaging of the medication to ensure it has not been tampered with or expired.

Unfortunately, fake drugs are prevalent worldwide. Fake or counterfeit drugs are substances that include too much or too little active ingredient, no active ingredient, or contain toxic ingredients. These substances and their packaging are intended to deliberately mislead patients and health professionals as they often look exactly like the real thing.

FAKE MEDICINES HARM – NOT HEAL

There are a lot of shady ingredients found in fake medicines that are directly responsible for serious disability and even death. This includes poisons such as mercury, rat poison, paint and antifreeze.



MERCURY



RAT POISONING



PAINT



ANTIFREEZE



www.fightthefakes.org

Substandard medications are also a concern. These products are produced by legitimate manufacturers but do not meet quality standards, meaning they may be contaminated or expired. Fake and substandard medications jeopardize trust in the medical system and can lead to dangerous health effects such as further illness, disability, or even death.

Fake and substandard medicines are found in all countries and are particularly prevalent in low- and middle-income countries. According to the [World Health Organization](#), the most common fake medicines are antimalarials and antibiotics.

► QUICK TIPS

- Buy all your medication from a reliable pharmacy at home prior to departure.
- Ask your pharmacist or contact a doctor at your destination to ensure that your medication is available and can be prescribed to you in case you need a refill. If your medication is not available, ask your regular healthcare practitioner if there is a suitable alternative available.
- If you require an emergency refill, you will need to get a prescription from a local doctor or a doctor licensed to practice in that country. Show the doctor a copy of your original prescription and letter from your healthcare practitioner (translated in a language understood at your destination if possible). Bring these documents to the pharmacist so they can check they are dispensing the correct medication.

- Be aware that prescribing practices may differ at your destination. For example, you may need a prescription for medication you can get over-the-counter at home, or you may be able to purchase your prescription medication without one. Always consult a doctor before changing your existing medication or taking a new medication.
- Opt for pharmacies in university-affiliated hospitals in urban areas. They usually have English-speaking pharmacists on staff. Ask a trusted local doctor for recommendations on reliable pharmacies.
- Ask to speak with the pharmacist directly. In some countries, licensed pharmacists may not be required to be present or dispense medication to the patient.
- Be cautious of fake or substandard medicines. Avoid buying medication from unlicensed pharmacies, markets, stalls, or online stores.

- Once you have obtained your medication, check that you have the right medication and dosage. Always check that your medication has not been tampered with and is not expired.
- Once you return home, follow-up with your healthcare practitioner if you required medical care abroad, needed a prescription refill, changed your medication, or started a new medication.

Travelling with medication checklist

► Before you go



Check the legality of travelling with your medication and ensure you are in compliance with your destination's regulations. Check your destination's embassy, consulate, Ministry of Health, or national drug administration body for details on medication allowances and restrictions. If your medication contains a controlled substance, check the [International Narcotics Control Board \(INCB\)](#) website and the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM) list of [international regulations on importation of medicines for personal use](#).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Book an appointment with your healthcare practitioner or travel medicine specialist at least 4-6 weeks before departure. Make sure you can get enough medication for the duration of your trip, plus an extra supply.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Find out if your medication is available at your destination and can be prescribed to you in case you need a refill. If it is not available, talk to your healthcare practitioner about an appropriate substitute.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask your healthcare practitioner or pharmacist how to adapt your medication regimen across different time zones.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask your healthcare practitioner or pharmacist for a copy of your original prescription and a letter describing your condition and treatment plan, including details of all required medication and medical supplies.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pack medication in your handbag and carry-on bag.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep medication in its original packaging. Ensure it is clearly labelled with the name of the drug (generic and brand name), dosage, your full name (as on your passport), and your healthcare practitioner's name and contact information.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If your medication is sensitive to temperature extremes, make arrangements for safe storage during transit and at your destination. For example, some medication may need to be stored at room temperature (20-25°C / 68-77°F) or refrigerated (2-8°C / 35-46°F). Ask your pharmacist for advice if needed.

<input type="checkbox"/>	If you are travelling with medical supplies (e.g. syringes, portable oxygen concentrators), contact your transit company in advance to ask about their use during transit.
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► At your destination

<input type="checkbox"/>	Take your medication routinely and consistently. Do not reduce or stop taking your medication unless advised by a healthcare practitioner. Do not take more medication than what is prescribed to you for a 24-hour period.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspect your medication before taking it to ensure it has not been damaged. If it appears different (e.g. change in consistency, colour, or smell), discard it and contact a doctor and pharmacist to obtain a replacement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you require a refill of your medication, show the attending doctor the copy of your original prescription and letter from your healthcare practitioner. In most cases, you will need a prescription from a doctor licensed to practice in that country.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Opt for university-affiliated pharmacies in large urban centres. If you need help finding a reliable pharmacy and English-speaking pharmacist, consult an English-speaking doctor at your destination.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be cautious of fake or substandard medicines. Avoid buying medication from unlicensed pharmacies, markets, stalls, or online.

☐

Ask to speak to the pharmacist directly and ensure you have been prescribed the correct medication and dosage.

► When you return

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To ensure continuity of care, follow up with your healthcare practitioner at home if you required medical care abroad, needed a prescription refill, changed your medication, or started a new medication.

Resources

Travelling with medication:

- [Drugs.com](https://www.drugs.com): International drug names
- [International Narcotics Control Board \(INCB\)](https://www.incb.org): Country regulations for travellers carrying medicines containing controlled substances
- [International Society of Travel Medicine \(ISTM\) Pharmacist Professional Group Database](https://www.istm.org): International regulations on importation of medicines for personal use
- [National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](https://www.naTHNaC.org): Medicines and travel
- [FitForTravel](https://www.fitfortravel.com): Travelling with Medicines

Doctors abroad:

- [International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers](https://www.iaamat.org): Medical directory
- [International Society of Travel Medicine](https://www.istm.org): Global travel clinic directory

For resources related to travelling with a health condition, health risks abroad, travel health insurance, and more, visit www.iamat.org

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