

AIR TRAVEL & SICKLE CELL DISEASE

Here are some tips to keep your child healthy and hopefully sickle cell “crisis” free on your holiday. Sometimes even the best attempts may not avert crises but being prepared will hopefully lessen the severity of crises and ease anxiety.

AIR TRAVEL OR FLYING CAN CAUSE CRISIS IN A COUPLE OF WAYS:

1. Major problems can arise from the decrease in oxygen in the cabin air. The aircraft is only pressurized to about 7,000 feet above sea level, which is high enough to get some people with sickle cell in trouble (See below if air travel has been difficult before).
2. Problems also can be related to dehydration. The humidity in the aircraft is very low so fluid intake needs to be increased **before and during the flight** (Take your own extra water or other hydration fluid).
3. Planes can be cold inside and often traveling can be stressful. Ensure you dress your child in **warm clothes in layers**, and plan to get **lots of rest** at both ends of your trip.

OTHER IMPORTANT TRIP PLANNING STRATEGIES:

- Bring an adequate supply of your medications: penicillin, folic acid, Tylenol or Advil
- Bring a travel letter from our clinic summarizing your child’s disease complications and the most recent laboratory results
- Make sure your child’s vaccinations are up-to-date and ensure your child washes their hands regularly when traveling to limit picking up any illness

Remember to keep your child well hydrated when you are traveling to hot climates. Children with sickle cell disease cannot concentrate their urine well and get dehydrated much more quickly than other children. Being dehydrated can cause blood cells to sickle more easily!

Have a great trip!