

## Medications

If you are taking various medicines for your PNH (or other conditions), remember to take enough medication to cover the length of your time away and a couple of days extra (in case your flight/travel home is delayed). If you are flying and have large quantities of medication, separate the quantity between your luggage, in case bags go missing.

Whether you are travelling domestic or overseas, carry at least some of your medication in your hand luggage, so that you have some medicine with you in the case of your main luggage going missing.

### Tips for taking medicines overseas:

Carry a letter from your doctor detailing what the medication is, how much you'll be taking with you, and stating that it's for your own personal use (it's an offence to carry or send Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medication overseas unless it's for your own personal use, or for the use of someone travelling with you).

Leave the medication in its original packaging so it's clearly labelled with your name and dosage instructions.

Make sure the medication is legal in the countries you're visiting – you can check this by contacting the relevant country's Foreign Embassy in Australia (see <http://protocol.dfat.gov.au/Mission/list.rails>)

If you have to inject medication, it may be preferable to carry your own needles and syringes (if it's allowed in the countries you're visiting). If you buy needles and syringes overseas, ensure they are sealed and sterile.

Source: [www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/health.html](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/health.html)

## Vaccinations

### It's important that you:

- Always check with your haematologist before having any vaccinations.
- Allow several months prior to travel to investigate whether you require vaccinations for your travel destination – some vaccinations may require several doses and/or a set time frame to vaccinate, prior to travel.
- Discuss vaccinations with a health professional or a travel doctor (e.g., [www.travelclinic.com.au/](http://www.travelclinic.com.au/)) to confirm you have the correct vaccination coverage for your trip.

Disclaimer: The information provided in "Planning Travel with PNH" has been provided by the PNHSAA as a general guide for people with PNH, to assist in planning travel in the context of living with PNH. It should not be solely relied on for information on travel planning. The PNHSAA shall not be held responsible for the information provided, any misinterpretation of that information or any issues that the reader may experience with travel planning or during travel. The PNHSAA advises that PNH patients should always consult with their haematologist concerning any travel plans and undertake their own research concerning all aspects of travel planning, so as to be fully informed and prepared prior to departure.

## keeping healthy while travelling overseas

Stress, fatigue and infections can increase PNH-related haemolysis, which may lead to you being unwell or developing PNH complications. So you need to be especially vigilant with your personal care and hygiene when travelling and be mindful not to get run down, to help protect your body from picking up infections – from tropical diseases to an upset digestive system and even just a cold.

Common illnesses that travellers can pick up are often from the simple things, like eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Before you depart, check whether tap water and local food is safe to consume. There are a number of mosquito-borne diseases you can contract in some regions and tropical areas.

Health risks within a country can vary from one region to another and local authorities may be slow to announce outbreaks of disease. Check [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) for the latest travel advice and travel bulletins for your destination before you depart and while travelling, so you have the latest information.

### Precautions to help stay healthy while travelling

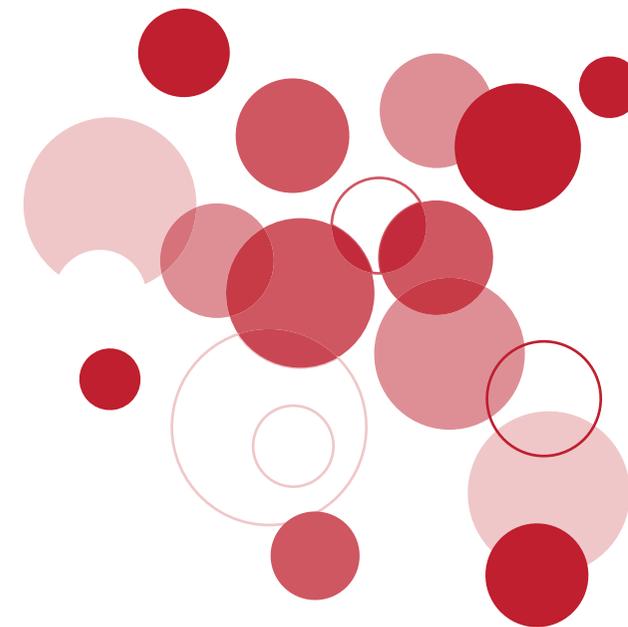
- Where local tap water is not safe or uncertain, only use bottled water (check the seal) to drink and brush your teeth. Don't put ice in drinks – freezing preserves germs. Avoid uncooked food, including salads and fruit that you cannot peel.
- In relevant regions, help prevent mosquito bites by wearing light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing that cover your arms and legs, regularly apply an appropriate insect repellent and stay in mosquito-proof accommodation.
- Exercise and be active within your limits. Include rest time in your travel itinerary.
- Practice safe sex to help avoid sexually transmissible infections.
- Wear a pair of thongs when showering.

### Other Health-Related Travel Tips

#### Before you depart:

- If your trip will involve an increase to your usual physical activity, such as a lot of walking, gradually build up your fitness (after receiving clearance from your haematologist) before you depart.
- If you plan to travel to locations or undertake activities at high altitudes (>2,500 m), speak to your haematologist to get advice specific to your PNH situation. Altitude sickness can affect anyone, even the physically fit.
- If you are planning to scuba dive, seek your haematologist's specific advice on any health risks this may pose for you.

Source: [www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/health.html](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/health.html)  
See [www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/health.html](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/health.html) for more health-related travel tips.



# planning travel with pnh

If you have PNH, it's important to plan ahead for any travel you may be doing, be it for work, holidays or personal reasons. Apart from the usual matters to consider with travel, having PNH means you also need to consider your current health, any health needs you may have while travelling and ways to help avoid becoming ill while you're away.

**Allow at least 3 months for travel planning**, especially if you are travelling overseas, to ensure you can organise such things as applying for travel insurance (which may require assistance from your haematologist) and organising medications and treatment you may need while you're away. Of course, sometimes the need to travel happens unexpectedly, in which case you just have to work within the time restraints available.

**Before you book any flights or accommodation**, make a list of all items you will need to consider concerning your health, and the estimated time it will take to confirm these items.

The following information aims to provide some tips for people with PNH who are planning to travel.

## first steps for planning travel with pnh

*For All Travel (domestic and international):*

**Firstly, always discuss with your haematologist** where you plan to travel, how long you plan to travel, and whether your PNH health is stable for travel (your "travel fitness"). You will need to decide, in discussion with your haematologist, whether your travel plans may potentially jeopardise your health or whether they are in keeping with your long term wellbeing.

**Consider whether you will require PNH treatment while you are away.** For people requiring regular infusions as part of your PNH treatment, you may need to have treatment at your destination if you are travelling for longer than 2 weeks, whether that is within Australia or overseas.

- If this is the case, discuss with your haematologist so that the possibility of an infusion at your destination can be investigated.

**Consider organising an emergency medical contact for your destination.** Should you become unwell it may be useful to have a medical specialist contact who understands PNH.

- Discuss with your haematologist the possibility of arranging for a haematologist contact at your travel destination.

For further information on arranging treatment or medical needs prior to travelling, you or your haematologist may contact:  
Michael Brown, Clinical Nurse Consultant  
at The Royal Melbourne Hospital National PNH Support Service  
email: Michael.Brown@mh.org.au . Mb: 0426 973 807

## For International Travel

Visit [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) and look at the "Travel Advice" section for your destination country. This website is provided by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and has specific information on your destination(s) including practical information on health issues and healthcare services.

## Travel Insurance

**"If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel."**  
— DFAT

DFAT strongly advises that all people take out comprehensive travel insurance prior to travelling overseas, including cover for all medical expenses for injury or sudden illness. Fully disclose any pre-existing medical conditions in writing. Medical costs overseas can be in the tens of thousands of dollars and many families have been burdened financially in paying these costs if things go wrong.

(Source: [www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/travelling-well.pdf](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/travelling-well.pdf))

Smartraveller.gov.au offers these travel insurance tips:

Travel insurance is as essential as your passport regardless of your travel destination.

If you incur medical or other expenses while overseas and you don't have travel insurance, you are personally liable for covering these costs. The Australian Government cannot pay these expenses.

Read the Product Disclosure Statement and make sure that you understand exactly what your travel insurance policy covers. Also check the policy's exclusions including how it deals with any pre-existing medical conditions you may have.

(Source: [www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/insurance-postcard.pdf](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/insurance-postcard.pdf))

The **Insurance Council of Australia** suggestions for choosing travel insurance include the following points:

- Shop around to find a policy that suits your individual requirements and always read the Product Disclosure Statement prior to purchasing your travel insurance. Ensure that you understand exactly what your travel insurance covers and that you are aware of any excess and where it may apply.
- Declare any pre-existing medical conditions you may have. The Product Disclosure Statement will detail the types of pre-existing medical conditions that could exclude you from cover.\* Failure to declare a pre-existing medical condition could jeopardise any claim you subsequently make.
- Where you cannot obtain travel insurance to cover personal medical circumstances, you should consider the potential financial risks very carefully before deciding whether to proceed with planned travel.

(Source: [www.insurancecouncil.com.au/for-consumers/consumer-tips/travel-insurance](http://www.insurancecouncil.com.au/for-consumers/consumer-tips/travel-insurance))

\*Most insurers do not list PNH as a pre-existing medical condition. If this is the case, make contact with the insurer to discuss your circumstances. You may be required to fill out a pre-existing medical condition form and/or provide a letter from your haematologist that describes PNH, your current health status and your haematologist's medical opinion on your medical fitness to travel with the condition.

NOTE: All medical conditions (not just PNH) should be declared when applying for travel insurance, to avoid unexpected and expensive complications in the event of a medical emergency.

The Insurance Council of Australia lists several Insurance Companies for further inquiries into pre-existing medical conditions for travel insurance. See: <http://www.insurancecouncil.com.au/for-consumers/find-an-insurer>.

If you can't find the insurance product you need, you may wish to contact an Insurance Broker, or a Travel Agent may also be able to advise on Insurance Companies that offer travel insurance for pre-existing medical conditions.

## Reciprocal Health Care Agreement (RHCA)

Medicare benefits are not available for treatment received overseas, however the Australian Government has signed RHCA with the following countries - Belgium, Finland, Italy, Malta, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. This means that if you are an Australian resident you may receive some assistance\* with the cost of medical treatment whilst visiting these countries

The various RHCA differ in their level of medical assistance covered in each of the participating countries and typically cover emergency medical care only.

Medicare Australia advises that a RHCA does not replace the need for private travel health insurance, and strongly recommend that you have suitable insurance to cover you for the period you will be travelling.

It is important that you check with Medicare prior to your travel to one of the participating RHCA countries, to confirm what medical assistance you may be eligible for in that particular country.

For more information on Medicare RHCA, visit:

[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/reciprocal-health-care-agreements](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/reciprocal-health-care-agreements)