



Tips for going on holiday with an allergic baby or toddler

One of the main tips for successfully managing food allergies is to be organised and this couldn't be more important than when going on holiday!

Going on a family holiday can be great fun and the key to successfully staying away from home is to plan ahead. I for one don't think families with allergic children should be put off from going on holiday or even staying away from home overnight. And just how much planning is needed depends on things like where you are going, how you are getting there, how long you are staying and the available facilities.

We have stayed away from home with our son on a number of occasions. And whilst I don't think you should let your child's allergies stop you from going on holiday, I do believe you have to be realistic about the type of holiday you have. We have always opted to go self-catering and the furthest we've been is to Spain. Personally, I would not wish to stay anywhere without kitchen facilities longer than overnight.

If you are thinking of going on holiday with your baby or toddler or even just staying away overnight, here are my top tips for an enjoyable trip:

1. PLAN YOUR HOLIDAY PROPERLY

Think carefully about the type of holiday you want, the facilities you will need and take into consideration the travelling method and times.

2. TAKE A SUPPLY OF "EASY" FOOD

Always take a good supply of "easy" food with you for the journey and the start of your holiday. Make sure you have enough for any unexpected blips that might arise such as motorway traffic or flight delays.

In terms of "easy" food, I always take the following:

- bananas
- avocados
- tin of sardines in olive or sunflower oil
- homemade gluten-free bread
- made up formula in a thermos
- box of baby rice
- snacks such as corn crisps

These foods are suitable for my son but obviously you will need to alter it to suit your baby or toddler!

3. PLAN FOR THE RETURN JOURNEY

Don't forget to take extra supplies for the journey home, for example, a spare tin of sardines. Schedule in a trip to the supermarket before you leave to stock up on any perishable items such as bananas and avocados.

4. REMEMBER ALL MEDICATION

Don't forget to take all of your child's medication, formula and creams with you. It's best to be on the safe side and don't assume that you will be able to buy or obtain them while you are away. And remember to keep them with you as they are no use back in your hotel room! Take a list of useful contact numbers, such as your GP, in case you need to speak to them whilst you are away.

5. OBTAIN A EUROPE HEALTH INSURANCE CARD (EHIC)

If you are going to Europe, make sure you've got a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for all the members of your family. The EHIC can be used to cover any necessary medical treatment due to either an accident or illness within the European Economic Area (EEA). For more information, go to www.ehicard.org.

6. HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Be realistic about the amount of eating in or out that you'll do on holiday. When I'm on holiday, I know that I will have to spend some time in the kitchen cooking for my son. I like to menu plan and, if possible, on the first evening do some batch cooking to put in the freezer – this way I still get to enjoy the rest of the holiday!

7. IF EATING OUT, BE PREPARED

If you go abroad on holiday and do plan on eating out, make sure you are prepared. You will need to be able to explain that your child has allergies and that you have either bought your own food along for them or that you need to check the ingredients of dishes very carefully. To help you with this, you can buy translation cards which are available from the Allergy UK site – for more information, go to www.allergyuk.org.

8. ENJOY!

And finally don't forget to enjoy – you're on holiday!

Article written by Lucy Cahil, March 2007

Please note that this article is not intended to provide any professional / medical advice. For advice, always consult your GP or dietician.