Helpful Hints for Travelling whilst Pregnant

Travel during pregnancy is safe for most women, as long as your pregnancy is uncomplicated.

Travel may worsen some of the problems associated with pregnancy, such as nausea and fatigue. Be guided by how you feel and rest when you are able.

The second trimester may the best time in which to travel; most common pregnancy-related problems occur in the first and third trimesters.

Consider your emotional and physical wellbeing.

Pre-Trip Planning

* Consider your comfort whilst travelling: choose the quickest options where possible.
* Consider the flexibility of your travel plans: make your plans easy to change if necessary (e.g. flexible tickets)
* Check with your airline regarding travel restrictions according to gestation. Most commercial airlines restrict travel after 36 weeks for singleton pregnancies and 32 weeks for multiples.
* Consider the quality and accessibility of health services at your destination.
* Ensure that you have adequate medical insurance and check the specifics of the obstetric coverage and evacuation policies.
* Prior to leaving, ensure that you have a check-up with your doctor or midwife.
* Aim to avoid travel to regions affected by transmission of Zika virus and malaria, unless absolutely necessary. If you are planning a significant overseas trip, talk to your GP or travel doctor about potential risks involved and how to reduce them.
* Consider vaccination; this will be dependent upon prior vaccine history and your destination.

Take records

Many airlines require a letter from your Midwife or Doctor stating gestational age and fitness to fly.

A copy of antenatal records is useful if you need to seek medical attention.

Take a medical kit

This might include antenatal supplements, any regular medications, pain relief, ointment for haemorrhoids, treatment for yeast infections and oral rehydration salts. Take advice from your doctor regarding antibiotics and other treatments which may be useful if travelling to remote areas.

Whilst Travelling

* Keep yourself well hydrated and make regular stops to stretch your legs where possible.
* In cars, seatbelts should be worn at all times. Buckle the hip belt low, beneath your bump; the shoulder belt should run in the centre of your chest and to the side of your bump.
* When flying, it is advisable to wear your seatbelt when seated, to reduce the risk from turbulence.

Both long haul travel (long periods of immobility) and being pregnant increase the risk of developing a blood clot in the veins of the leg or elsewhere (deep vein thrombosis or DVT) which may be life-threatening if it travels to the lungs (pulmonary embolus or PE).

To reduce the risk of DVT formation:

* Get up frequently and walk around
* Sit in an aisle seat
* Ensure that you are well hydrated
* Perform calf exercises every 30 mins when awake
* Wear support stockings
* Avoid alcohol and caffeine (dehydration)
* Avoid restrictive clothing.

Infection risk

Travelling abroad may increase your risk of acquiring infections, such as travellers’ diarrhoea and respiratory illnesses, which may be more severe if you are pregnant.

To minimise your risk of infection:

* Carry hand sanitiser / wash hands prior to eating and after toileting
* Be careful to avoid unsafe food and water. Drink bottled and sealed water only; observe the same rules for safe eating in pregnancy as you would at home; but extra vigilance may be needed with raw or undercooked foods: ‘peel it, boil it, cook it or forget it’.
* Consider vaccination against influenza and pertussis

Seek urgent medical attention if you develop any of the following:

* Pelvic / abdominal pain
* Bleeding
* Rupture of membranes
* Contractions or preterm labour
* Vomiting / diarrhoea / dehydration
* Symptoms of pre-eclampsia: swelling / headaches / visual disturbance, Nausea and vomiting
* Symptoms of venous thromboembolism (DVT / PE): shortness of breath / leg swelling / calf or thigh pain

Useful Website Resources

IAMAT (International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers) [www.iamat.org](http://www.iamat.org)

ISTM (International Society of Travel Medicine; has a Global Clinic Directory) [www.istm.org](http://www.istm.org)

<https://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Travel-During-Pregnancy>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/travel-pregnant/>

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/patients/patient-information-leaflets/pregnancy/air-travel-pregnancy.pdf>

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/pregnant-travellers.aspx>