

Dear Readers: This is the free newsletter of the Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America, Texas Chapter. If you do not wish to receive other newsletters from AAFA-TX, please request we remove your address. To subscribe, email your request to [info@aafatexas.org](mailto:info@aafatexas.org). Addresses are never shared. Thank you. Please add new sender's email ([joanhart@aafatexas.org](mailto:joanhart@aafatexas.org)) to your address book to ensure delivery. Welcome SAFER Houston, a food allergy, asthma and allergy support group affiliate of AAFA-TX.

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**VACATION TIPS FOR ASTHMA OR ALLERGY SUFFERERS**

\* Everyone looks forward to a break in routines and a change of scenery. Some plan to take their trips during summer and others prefer a winter vacation. Whatever the season or time you plan your vacation trip, if you or a family member has asthma or allergies, this fun trip **means planning ahead** to ensure the trip remains fun.

\* **The first step to having a pleasant and worry-free trip is to select a location where your allergens aren't active.** You can escape your allergens with wise planning. If you have pollen allergies, hiking the wooded trails in the spring or fall might cause allergy misery but skiing those same trails in the winter might be very pleasant. Take a few moments on the internet or with the Hotel and Visitors Convention Bureau for the area you'd like to visit and check for seasonal allergens for your chosen destination. For example, if you live in Texas and Mountain Cedar makes you miserable in mid-winter, you may want to plan a beach vacation during Mountain Cedar season.

\* Once you've selected your vacation destination **check your health insurance policy** to see what, if any, coverage you'll have in that area in case of an emergency, especially if you're planning a trip outside the country. NOTE: **many asthma and allergy medications, especially epinephrine injectors, aren't available in all other countries.**

\* Next, **when booking your hotel rooms**, request non-smoking rooms. This may be a bigger challenge internationally but some of the larger hotel chains are accommodating guests with non-smoking rooms.

\* If you have food, insect, medication or any other allergy that might lead to **anaphylaxis, take an epinephrine device** with you. To avoid any difficulties with customs or airport security, **always have your prescription information on all medication and devices.**

\* If **traveling stateside, ask your physician for recommendations of any colleagues at your travel destination** in case of medical emergencies. Make a **list of the prescription medications** you use, including prescription number, dosage and pharmacy phone number. Many chain pharmacies have locations in other states. Ask your pharmacy to check locations for you or you can do it online. **Pharmacists away from home can access your prescription information** through the store's central computer system if you need emergency medication refills as long as your prescriptions are with a larger chain. If not, with contact info, a local pharmacy can call another in an emergency.

\* When packing, **include a medication kit** and keep it **in your carry-on luggage**. Take enough prescription medication (in original containers) to last the trip plus an extra supply in case of emergency. Don't forget to pack the epinephrine injector (if needed) in this medical kit. Pack a tube of topical hydrocortisone cream and either prescription or OTC antihistamines, too.

\* If you use a **peak flow meter**, pack it along with your pfm chart. If anyone uses or might need asthma medication delivered through a nebulizer, look into a **smaller, portable nebulizer** that can be easily transported when traveling. Some of these come with an alternate power source (a car's cigarette lighter or batteries – ask your healthcare provider for suggestions as some may lack sufficient power to deliver medication as needed) and if traveling internationally, check the voltage used in the country to be visited. **You may need an outlet prong and voltage converter, too.** The USA uses 110 volts, as does Mexico and Canada but Europe generally uses 220 volts. Voltage varies in Asia, Africa and South America. Without a converter, the higher voltage will burn out American appliances including a nebulizer. The outlets overseas may not accept the US safety prong system, so you'll require a set of converter jacks for some countries.

\* If you have severe asthma or anaphylactic food allergies and haven't done so already, it may be a good idea to purchase a **medical alert bracelet or necklace**. It's also a good idea to **prepare some index cards listing your food allergy** to share with new restaurants on your trip. If **traveling internationally** and you don't speak/write the language fluently, restaurant information in the major languages is available to download free on <http://www.foodallergyinitiative.org>

\* **While traveling, protect yourself** from allergy or asthma triggers or situations that may cause a flare up. Be certain to **remain well-hydrated** with bottled water, especially in the dry atmosphere on planes or if your destination is a hot weather locale. Ask for a **special meal** on planes if you're food allergic or **bring your own "safe" food**. As always, **avoid tobacco smoke**. Smoking isn't banned in the majority of public places internationally so be wise in your choice of restaurants, clubs and other enclosed areas of interest.

\* If **traveling by car**, have the car's **ventilation system cleared of mold or mildew** before you begin your trip.

\* If you have **exercise induced asthma**, it's a good idea to **carry your asthma medications on your person**. Adjustable waist packs or fanny packs are a good idea. You can find a good choice online if you can't find them in stores (one site: <http://www.beltoutlet.com/waistpacks.htm>)

\* Note: if **traveling to a beach or a humid area protect your asthma medications from moisture** and humidity which will gum them up. Placing them in a zip lock bag will help keep them dry but these bags aren't watertight. You can buy waterproof pouches however. Have a safe and fun trip! For more information, contact AAFA-TX at [info@aafatexas.org](mailto:info@aafatexas.org) or check [www.aafatexas.org](http://www.aafatexas.org)

**Upcoming AAFA-TX programs:** General information, eligibility qualifications and application for the 2008-2009 academic year "AAFA-TX Kareem Bacchus Memorial Scholarships" is available online at [www.aafatexas.org](http://www.aafatexas.org) Deadlines for application is March 31, 2009. Successful candidates will be notified in June, 2009. **2) March 11** "Asthma & Allergy Essentials for Childcare Providers" Tarrant Cty. United Way, Wilbarger St., Patty Carlton, instructor. For more information, send your inquiries to [info@aafatexas.org](mailto:info@aafatexas.org)

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