

BHD and Travel: Help and Advice



Can I go on holiday with BHD?

With some planning around what you are able to do, you can enjoy a holiday or trip. You may have questions about flying, activities on holiday, or insurance. We hope these questions are answered below.

Is it safe to travel with BHD?

If you feel well enough to travel and are not undergoing intensive treatment e.g. for kidney cancer or pneumothorax (known as a collapsed or punctured lung) you can still enjoy holidays or trips when living with BHD. Here are some common questions and answers to help you when planning a trip.

Please always consult your doctor if you have any concerns or questions about travelling and holidaying with BHD. They will be best placed to advise on your individual health.



Can I fly with a pneumothorax?

It is not safe to fly when you are experiencing a pneumothorax. You should wait until it has healed and for a short time afterwards. It is best to wait until your doctor says you can fly again (Asthma + Lung UK, 2024).

Can I travel if I have kidney cancer?

If your doctor says you are well enough to travel, you can go on holiday with kidney cancer. You should consider the following:

1. If you are having chemotherapy your immune system will be compromised. You may wish to avoid travelling on crowded transport such as aeroplanes to lower the risk of getting an infection. You can discuss this with your doctor.
2. Make sure you have enough treatment, medications etc for your time away.
3. Avoid booking a trip which clashes with any treatment you may have.
4. You may prefer to stay in your home country for a holiday to avoid complications which could arise from needing treatment abroad.

Holiday activities

Some activities can be a risk for developing a pneumothorax.

Activities where a change of air pressure occurs, such as in scuba diving, are not advised for people with BHD. This is especially true if you have previously had a pneumothorax. You can read the advice from specialists in a blog about BHD and scuba diving. You can find the blog on our news page:

<https://www.thebhdfoundation.org/blog>

If you have any concerns or questions about activities that you may undertake whilst travelling, please talk to your doctor.



How to prepare for your trip

- It is a good idea to get a doctor's letter and a list of health conditions, treatments, or medication you may need for travelling overseas. If you are flying, carrying medication or medical supplies in your hand luggage will need a doctor's letter.
- Consider your fitness level if you are being treated or recovering from treatment for a pneumothorax or kidney cancer. Plan a relaxing trip if you are not at full fitness.
- Make sure you have the contact details for your GP and emergency family contacts in case you need them. You can also save an emergency contact on your mobile phone known as an ICE – in case of emergency. You can find out more here: <https://www.stroke.org.uk/blog/smart-phone-feature-case-emergency-ice>
- If you are travelling overseas make note of the country's emergency services telephone number and how to get urgent care if needed. It will help to be prepared for this even if you don't use them.



- The BHD Foundation has partnered with CamRARE to create a BHD 'patient passport'. It contains a summary of your health history, medications, and treatments and can be useful in case of a medical emergency. You can apply for your free rare disease patient passport here by scanning the QR code below.



- If you are going overseas, there may be restrictions on carrying certain prescription medications into the country you are visiting. This can also include transiting countries. It is a good idea to check this through the country's embassy before you leave. For those in the UK, the NHS Fit For Travel website has more information on travelling with medicines. Please scan QR code below to see this.



- If you have any concerns regarding flying it might be worth speaking to your GP for advice before you travel.

Travel insurance and BHD

It is recommended that you get travel insurance for any overseas trips you may take. Unplanned medical treatment can be very costly if you are not covered by insurance whilst travelling abroad.

However, it can be challenging to get the right travel insurance when you live with a rare condition such as BHD. It counts as a pre-existing medical condition.

We are aware that getting travel insurance for a rare genetic condition can be frustrating due to the lack of knowledge of the condition by insurance companies. Also, insurers may have trouble fitting a rare genetic condition such as BHD into their requirements. Please be assured that the issues with getting travel insurance are widely experienced by the rare disease community and it is not just you that can find the process complicated.

We do not endorse any insurance providers nor are we able to give individual advice regarding travel insurance. However, we have a few tips to help you:

- It can be more helpful to ring insurance companies directly when arranging travel insurance. This is because rare conditions such as BHD are not usually listed under pre-existing conditions in online forms
- It is a good idea to call multiple insurance providers for quotes as each insurance provider will have different criteria for coverage and prices. Using an insurance broker can help this.
- There are some insurance providers who are experienced in providing cover for those with pre-existing or rare medical conditions.

UK

Kidney Cancer UK have a good guide to travel insurance with a preexisting medical condition with links to insurance organisations which may be useful if you live in the UK. This resource has been created with Association of British Insurers (ABI). Please scan QR code or follow the link: <https://www.kcuk.org.uk/patient-support/travel-insurance-and-kidney-cancer/>



USA

If you are in the USA, the following links may be of help:

- The Centre for Disease Control USA has advice for travellers with chronic health conditions:
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/chronic-illnesses>
- Advice on getting healthcare during travel if you are from the USA, including links for information for those from Canada, Australia, China, the UK and South Africa:
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/health-care-during-travel>

References

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If you would like to get in touch with the BHD Foundation, please email our team: contact@bhdsyndrome.org

For more information about our work and BHD, you can visit our website: www.thebhdfoundation.org