Travelling with medication

Prescription medications for legitimate health conditions may come under intense scrutiny by foreign officials. In some countries, drugs that are legal and readily available in Canada are considered illegal, require a prescription, or may arouse suspicions among local officials and customs and immigration authorities. It is always best to contact the foreign government offices accredited to Canada of the country you plan to visit to confirm the status of your medication.

See our page on Cannabis and international travel.

When travelling abroad with prescription or over-the-counter medication:

- The limit of two carry-on bags does not apply to medical supplies, equipment and mobility aids.
- Pack all medications in your carry-on baggage in their original, labelled containers to facilitate airport security and customs screening. Prescription medication is exempted from the liquid restrictions but must be presented to the screening officer separately from your carry-on baggage.
- Do not try to save luggage space by combining medications into a single container.
- Use the Family/Special Needs security line. Screening officers at these lines are trained to offer additional assistance.
- Pack an extra supply of medication in case you are away for longer than expected.
- Carry a copy of the original prescription and ensure that both the generic and trade names of the medication are included in case of loss or theft. A doctor's note describing why you are taking the medication is also recommended.
- Do not buy medication outside Canada unless you have been advised to do so by a health care professional. Be aware of counterfeit medications or those that may not meet Canadian standards.
- If you are carrying any unusual medication, check that it is legal and readily available in the country you intend to visit. Contact the foreign government office in Canada of the country you plan to visit before departing to make sure the medical supplies you intend to bring are allowed into the country.
- Consult what you can bring on a plane to determine what you can and cannot pack in your carry-on luggage.

Canadian visitors to the United States should be aware that their personal medication may be subject to U.S. drug importation laws and regulations. In general, personal importation of a 90-day supply of medication is allowed, but only if the drug is not available in the United States. U.S. customs officials have relaxed their policy on the importation of prescription drugs through the mail from Canada. However, all packages are still carefully scrutinized. For further information, visit the website of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Bringing prescription medication back to Canada

To avoid interrupting a course of treatment, Health Canada may permit you to return from abroad with a single course of treatment or a 90-day supply, whichever is less based on the directions for use, of a prescription drug. The drug must be for your use or for the use of a person who is travelling with you and for whom you are responsible. The drug must be in hospital or pharmacy-dispensed packaging, the original retail packaging, or have the original label attached to it clearly indicating what the health product is and what it contains.

Bringing over-the-counter medication back to Canada

You are permitted to import a single course of treatment or a 90-day supply, whichever is less based on the directions for use, of an over-the-counter drug. The drug must be for your use or for the use of a person who is travelling with you and for whom you are responsible. The drug must be shipped or carried in hospital or pharmacy-dispensed packaging, the original retail packaging, or have the original label attached to it clearly indicating what the health product is and what it contains

Related links

- Sickness or injury
- Receiving medical care outside Canada
- Vaccination
- Travelling with disabilities
- Travelling with a medical device
- What you can bring on a plane

Other resources

- Animal and Plant Ingredients in Traditional Medicine (Environment and Climate Change Canada)

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