

Summer is almost synonymous with vacation travel. As the days grow warmer, you may be getting ready for a trip of your own. Travelling with Parkinson's can pose logistical and health challenges. However, it is far from impossible. Strategic planning can help you reduce stress and anxiety about travelling, allowing you to enjoy your trip.



Plan your trip with "TRAVEL PLANS"

The TRAVEL PLANS acronym was coined by Craig Snook, a person living with Parkinson's. Drawn from their lived experience, it has served them well in navigating travels, and it can help you prepare for yours.

	Notes by Craig	 Extra Tips
T ime	Plan for extra time; account for changing time zones and add time for potential delays.	Visit fewer places during your vacation and enjoy them longer. Book your trips well ahead of your travel date.
R elax/rest	Build in time to rest, pace yourself, be self-aware, and enjoy the moment.	Time-block rest periods before you leave, on arrival, mid-trip, and after you return. Symptoms can temporarily worsen after long travel; planned rest helps prevent this.
A larms	Set alarms for medications, stretching, or movement reminders (e.g. stop sitting).	Set before you leave home. Consult your doctor about how to manage your dose interval across time zones. Vibrating alarms work in shared spaces.
V alue	Focus on what matters most - enjoying the experience because you know you are prepared.	Before booking, pick your one or two "must-do" experiences and plan the trip around them. Everything else becomes a bonus.
E xercise	Keep moving when possible - even short walks or stretches help. You can do it wherever you are.	Some exercises you can do while sitting: a) lift up your legs from the floor and circle your ankle, b) relax your shoulders and gently roll from side to side.
L ists	Use checklists for clothes, gear, documents, home readiness (e.g. stop the mail). Carry a printed list of prescriptions and dosages, give it to a carepartner or friend.	Use checklists for clothes, documents, and medications, and other things you need to pack.
P ills	Pack all medications, plus extras, in separate place in case of delays or lost baggage.	Pack all medications (plus extras) in your carry-on, in original containers, in a bag labelled "Medication". Add a printed note of your schedule and the name/contact of your doctor.
L ight	Pack a flashlight and night light. Be aware of unfamiliar locations in the dark. Falls are a top issue for Parkinson's.	Leave the bathroom light on overnight in hotels, and clear a path from bed to bathroom before sleeping.
A ccessibility	Plan in advance for accessible transportation, lodging, and attractions.	Call the airline, train, bus, or cruise ship before booking to confirm if their accessibility options suit your needs. Before packing, label your assistive equipment.
N utrition	Bring healthy snacks and hydrate regularly - fuel your body.	Carry a refillable water bottle and drink water regularly, especially on long trips.
S leep	Prioritize quality rest before and during the trip. Revitalize with a 20-minute nap.	Keep your bedtime routine as close to home as possible (same wind-down, same pillow if you can pack it).



GETTING THERE: TIPS BY TRANSPORTATION

Whatever way you travel, start with these four steps:

- Call ahead, tell the travel provider you have Parkinson's, and describe your accessibility needs in detail.
- Check in early and use early boarding options where offered.
- Request mobility assistance (wheelchair, luggage help) for yourself or your bags.
- Ask for an aisle seat close to the washroom.



FLYING

Ask your airline while booking about their guidelines for wheelchair use and whether a companion can get an escort pass to accompany you past security. Mobility devices do not count toward your carry-on limit. Syringes are allowed if you have the labelled medication that requires them and the needle guards. Users of mobility devices can request private security screening.



TRAIN

Bring valid photo ID. Call the station ahead to arrange accessible seating, especially if a carepartner is travelling with you.



BUS

Book wheelchair-accessible buses. Some long-distance routes have onboard washrooms.



CAR

Plan driving around times you are unlikely to have an "off" period. Take regular breaks whether you or someone else is driving. Bring your disability parking permit.



CRUISE

Confirm accessible staterooms before booking. Ask whether ports require permits for motorized wheelchairs, and whether the cruise offers accessible excursions; if not, arrange a local wheelchair-accessible tour ahead of time.



HOTEL

Call to confirm accessibility: wheelchair-accessible rooms, shower seats, grab bars. Request a room near the elevator to reduce walking distance.



Travelling to a foreign country?

As a Canadian travelling abroad, add these to your plan:

- **Buy travel insurance.** OHIP does not cover medical expenses outside Canada. The Government of Canada advises buying travel insurance even if you are leaving the country for a single day. Confirm your policy covers pre-existing conditions and that Parkinson's is included.
- **Know the local emergency number** of your destination. 911 does not work everywhere.
- **Translate** key phrases describing your **Parkinson's symptoms** into the local language of your destination.
- **Check the daily weather forecast** and plan an outfit for each day, so that decision is made before you leave home.
- **Bring extra medication** beyond what your trip requires.
- **Consider using a travel agent** to simplify the planning.



Resources to help you on your next trip

- **Government of Canada travel site** (travel.gc.ca). Includes travel advisories, emergency contacts abroad, and insurance guidance. Search for "accessibility"
- **Travel Checklist** ([see next page](#)). Use as a starting point for packing, and update as needed.
- **Medication Note** ([see after checklist template](#)). Fill it out and keep it in your labelled medication bag. Add/remove relevant information as needed

Sources

- Government of Canada (2025). "Travel insurance". <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/documents/travel-insurance>
- Ngomba et al. (2026). "Travel health needs and experiences of people living with Parkinson's disease and their carers". <https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/taag027>
- Parkinson's Foundation. "Travelling". <https://www.parkinson.org/living-with-parkinsons/management/travelling>
- Snook, Craig. "Travel". Power for Parkinson's. <https://www.powerforparkinsons.org/blog/travel>



If you are changing time zones, set your phone to show both home and local time or have two watches.

TRAVEL CHECKLIST

For travelling with Parkinson's disease

Work through this checklist as you plan. You will not need every item on every trip; tick what applies to you and ignore the rest. Add or remove items as needed.

WEEKS BEFORE YOU GO

- ☐ Get the go-ahead from your doctor to travel
- ☐ Ask your neurologist for the name of a doctor near your destination
- ☐ Book travel and accommodation at least two weeks ahead
- ☐ Call your airline, train, bus, or cruise line to describe your accessibility needs and confirm they can be met
- ☐ Call your hotel to confirm accessible rooms, grab bars, shower seats, and a room near the elevator
- ☐ Request mobility assistance (wheelchair, luggage help) with each travel provider
- ☐ Refill all prescriptions and request extra medication
- ☐ Buy travel insurance; confirm it covers pre-existing conditions and includes Parkinson's
- ☐ Plan rest days: before departure, on arrival, mid-trip, and after you return home

THE WEEK BEFORE

- ☐ Fill out your Medication Note and print two copies
- ☐ Print your travel itinerary and confirmations
- ☐ Give a copy of your itinerary and medication list to a carepartner, family member, or friend
- ☐ Set medication alarms on your phone using your regular dose times (confirm with your doctor)
- ☐ Check the daily weather forecast and plan an outfit for each day
- ☐ Label your assistive equipment (cane, walker, wheelchair) with your name and phone number
- ☐ Arrange home readiness: stop the mail, arrange pet care, set lights on timers

PACKING

Medications and medical

- ☐ All medications in their original, labelled containers
- ☐ Extra medication beyond the length of your trip
- ☐ Medication bag, clearly labelled "Medication," packed in your carry-on
- ☐ Completed Medication Note
- ☐ Health card and insurance documents
- ☐ Flashlight and night light

Clothing and comfort

- ☐ Complete outfits folded together, including undergarments and socks
- ☐ Wrinkle-free, button-free, and elastic clothing that is simple to manage
- ☐ Shoes that slip on and off easily
- ☐ Backpack as a carry-on so both hands stay free
- ☐ Hanging toiletry bag with compartments
- ☐ Healthy snacks and a water bottle

TRAVEL DAY

- ☐ Take your medication bag in your carry-on, never in checked baggage
- ☐ Arrive early and check in early
- ☐ Ask about early boarding and priority seating (if you did not do so while booking)
- ☐ Request an aisle seat close to the washroom (if you did not do so while booking)
- ☐ Move regularly: ankle circles, shoulder rolls, heel raises, or a walk down the aisle when safe

TRAVELLING ABROAD

- ☐ Buy travel insurance; OHIP does not cover medical expenses outside Canada
- ☐ Check travel advisories for your destination at travel.gc.ca

- ☐ Register your trip with Registration of Canadians Abroad (it is a free service that allows the Government of Canada to notify you in case of an emergency at your destination or at home)
- ☐ Save the local emergency number (911 does not work everywhere)
- ☐ Translate key phrases describing your Parkinson's symptoms into the local language
- ☐ Pack a travel dictionary or translation app
- ☐ Set your phone to show home and local time
- ☐ Consider engaging a travel agent to simplify planning
- ☐ Confirm whether your destination requires additional documentations or permits for a motorized wheelchair

MY TRAVEL MEDICATION NOTE

Keep this note in your labelled medication bag, in your carry-on

I have Parkinson's disease. It is very important that I take my medications on time, every time. Missing or delaying a dose can make it hard for me to move, speak, or swallow.

ABOUT ME

Name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Drug allergies: _____

Other medical conditions: _____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Emergency contact (name and phone): _____

Family doctor (name and phone): _____

Neurologist or specialist (name and phone): _____

Pharmacy (name and phone): _____

TIME ZONES

Keep the same interval between doses, even when the clock changes. Write your usual home times below, then the matching local times at your destination.

My home time zone: _____

Destination time zone: _____

Time difference (hours ahead or behind): _____

MY MEDICATION SCHEDULE

[illegible]

OTHER NOTES

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-
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Date this note was last updated: _____

Review this note before every trip. Keep one copy in your carry-on and give a second copy to your carepartner or travel companion.