

## Traveling While Pregnant

“Although pregnancy is a normal state rather than a disabled condition, pregnant women need to consider the potential problems associated with ...travel, as well as the quality of medical care available at the destination and during transit. According to the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the safest time for a pregnant woman to travel is during the second trimester (18-24 weeks)... Women in the third trimester (25-36 weeks) may be asked by their physician to stay within 300 miles of home because of concerns about access to medical care in case of problems such as hypertension, phlebitis, or false or premature labor. The final decision should be based on a consultation with the woman’s health care provider.”<sup>1</sup>

Pregnant travelers can use the following checklist from the National Center for Infectious Disease as they prepare to travel. These items are of particular importance for those traveling abroad.

- Make sure your health insurance is valid while abroad and during pregnancy. Check to see if the policy covers a newborn should delivery take place. Obtain a supplemental travel insurance policy and a prepaid medical evacuation insurance policy.
- Check medical facilities at the destination. For women in the last trimester, medical facilities should be able to manage complications of pregnancy, toxemia, and cesarean sections.
- Determine beforehand whether prenatal care will be required abroad and, if so, who will provide it. Make sure prenatal visits requiring specific timing are not missed.
- Check ahead of time whether blood is screened for HIV and hepatitis B at the destination. Pregnant travelers and their companions should know their blood types.
- Check facilities at the destination for the availability of safe food and beverages, including bottled water and pasteurized milk.<sup>1</sup>



Additionally, consult your doctor about vaccinations. It is best to be vaccinated prior to becoming pregnant. If you need vaccines or prophylactic (preventative) drugs for your travels, discuss the safety of these medicines with your doctor. Most medications should be avoided, if possible, but some vaccines are still safe during pregnancy.<sup>1</sup>

During pregnancy, comfort is also of particular concern. Reserve an aisle seat on airplanes when possible. This seat allows you to get up and move around and access the bathroom more easily. Remember that airplane, as well as bus and train, aisles may be narrow and bathroom facilities small. These aspects may be considerations for you when deciding on your mode of travel and level of comfort.

**Note:** Air travel is safe for most pregnant women up to 36 weeks gestation, but travel is not recommended at any time during pregnancy for women who have either medical or obstetric complications — such as pregnancy-induced hypertension, poorly controlled diabetes, or sickle cell disease — that could result in an unforeseen emergency.<sup>2</sup>

For car travel, try not to travel more than 5–6 hours a day. Continue following car safety advice. Wear your seatbelt (including the lap and shoulder belt) even if there is an airbag. Keep your seat as far back from the dashboard as you can (at least 10 inches, if possible).

If traveling by sea, you may have an upset stomach. Check on cruise rules for pregnant women, and make sure the ship has a doctor or nurse on board. Ask your doctor about safe options for calming seasickness.<sup>3</sup>

Sources:

1. National Center for Infectious Disease (2000). Pregnancy, breast-feeding, and travel [on-line]. Retrieved February 20, 2008. From [http://medem.com/search/article\\_display.cfm?path=\\TANQUERAY\M\\_ContentItem&mstr=/M\\_ContentItem/ZZZ52JRE5BC.html&soc=CDC&srch\\_typ=NAV\\_SERCH](http://medem.com/search/article_display.cfm?path=\\TANQUERAY\M_ContentItem&mstr=/M_ContentItem/ZZZ52JRE5BC.html&soc=CDC&srch_typ=NAV_SERCH).
2. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (2008). Air travel during pregnancy safe for most women [on-line]. Retrieved April 15, 2008. From [http://medem.com/search/article\\_display.cfm?path=\\TANQUERAY\M\\_ContentItem&mstr=/M\\_ContentItem/ZZZKWOAGVC.html&soc=ACOG&srch\\_typ=NAV\\_SERCH](http://medem.com/search/article_display.cfm?path=\\TANQUERAY\M_ContentItem&mstr=/M_ContentItem/ZZZKWOAGVC.html&soc=ACOG&srch_typ=NAV_SERCH).
3. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (2007). Travel during pregnancy [on-line]. Retrieved February 20, 2008. From [http://medem.com/search/article\\_display.cfm?path=\\TANQUERAY\M\\_ContentItem&mstr=/M\\_ContentItem/ZZZPBP3C87C.html&soc=ACOG&srch\\_typ=NAV\\_SERCH](http://medem.com/search/article_display.cfm?path=\\TANQUERAY\M_ContentItem&mstr=/M_ContentItem/ZZZPBP3C87C.html&soc=ACOG&srch_typ=NAV_SERCH).