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## Holidays and travel after brain injury

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### Introduction

Going on holiday always takes careful preparation and there are many different things to consider such as your destination, how to get there, what to pack, among other things.

After a brain injury, planning a holiday might require even more care and it might be necessary to research new places to visit that can accommodate your needs. However, holiday organisers are increasingly considering the needs and wants of people with disabilities, broadening your options of possible holiday destinations.

Furthermore, there are various steps you can take to ensure that your holiday goes as smoothly as possible and this factsheet has been written to help you with this.

Additional practical information is offered to direct you to other sources of support with travelling, such as where to get financial support with travelling and information to consider for your travel insurance.

### Things to research in advance

Whether you are planning on having a short weekend away or a long holiday abroad, there are a number of things you should research in advance to help with making sure your holiday runs as smoothly as possible.

- If you are planning on going abroad, check whether there are any special health requirements for the countries that you are visiting. Vaccination may be required or advisable against certain native diseases.
- Check in advance whether the places you are travelling from, and the places you are travelling to, have accessible facilities and if so, where they are located. You might wish to mark these on a map to help with finding them if and when you need them. Some cities within the UK have this information available on their websites. Changing Places have a map of accessible toilets across the UK on their website at [www.changingplaces.uktoiletmap.org/](http://www.changingplaces.uktoiletmap.org/). You may need to have a Radar key to unlock some of these toilets (as they may be locked to the general public). Most local authorities sell Radar keys or you can buy them online. More information about this is available at [www.ncphlexicare.com/radar](http://www.ncphlexicare.com/radar).



- If you require medication on your holiday, check whether there are any restrictions on bringing your medication into the country to which you are travelling.
- The NHS' Fit for Travel website gives information on healthcare travel specifications for different countries: [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations)
- If you are not sure whether it is safe for you to fly because of your brain injury, check with your doctor. Please note that Headway cannot advise on the safety of flying after brain injury as this will depend on your personal circumstances such as how long ago your injury was and the severity of it.
- Check in advance that your insurance policy will cover your brain injury, as well as any aids or equipment that you may need to take with you. Standard travel insurance often will not cover brain injury, however there are specialist insurance companies that do. You can find a list of relevant insurance companies on page 5.
- If you frequently go on holiday by plane, find out whether you can obtain a Frequent Traveller's Medical Card, as this will give the airline a record of your needs so that you do not have to inform them each time you travel.
- Contact your holiday accommodation in advance to discuss any needs you may have.
- If you are planning on driving in another country, check whether you need an international driving permit. You can find more information about this on the UK government's website at [www.gov.uk/driving-abroad/international-driving-permit](http://www.gov.uk/driving-abroad/international-driving-permit).

## Planning your holiday

- Keep a separate labelled folder with holiday documents in so that you can keep a record of important paperwork and track the progress of your travel arrangements.
- Consider using a holiday planning app to help you with making arrangements.
- There are many travel comparison websites that can help visitors with browsing through accessible holiday packages. The Useful organisations section on page 6 lists some of these that you might wish to contact or browse through.
- The government's Foreign Travel Advice website allows you to look up general information about some countries which can help you to make a decision about your travel destination. Visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).



- If you have difficulties with planning and organising, see Headway's factsheet [Executive dysfunction after brain injury](#) for useful information and tips on coping with this.

## Advance notice

- If you will need help to board your vehicle of transport (i.e. coach, train, plane or ship), inform the relevant company in advance. Most companies require notice of at least 48 hours before departure.
- If you are travelling on a ship with a carer, let the shipping company know in advance as your carer might be able to travel for free.
- If you require a wheelchair, find out from your travel provider or transport company whether arrangements will need to be made to travel with it, as you may be required to put your wheelchair in storage during transport and have alternative arrangements made to assist you with getting on/off the vehicle.
- Ask your travel provider or transport company whether you will need extra time with boarding, and if so make sure you arrive with plenty of extra time to board.
- The Sunflower Lanyard scheme allows people with a hidden disability to access additional help in public places such as supermarkets or airports. You might wish to contact the transport hub from which you are travelling in advance to ask about whether they have sunflower lanyards and if so where you can access one from.

## Packing for your holiday

- Do ensure that you have a good supply of any required medication, aids and equipment to last you for your stay. If possible, take extras with you in case you are delayed from returning but make sure that this complies with any restrictions on medication types/amounts in the country you are visiting.
- Label medications clearly, or where possible, keep them in their original packaging.
- Remember to take your Headway Brain Injury Identity Card with you. The ID card can help to ensure that you receive appropriate response and support if you need help with explaining the effects of your brain injury. You can find out more about the ID card at [www.headway.org.uk/idcard](http://www.headway.org.uk/idcard) or by contacting Headway on 0115 924 0800.
- If you do not have a Headway ID card, the government suggests taking along a 'travelling letter' outlining the most common effects of your brain injury. You could consider using a free translating service, such as Google translate, to translate the information into the native language of the country that you are thinking of travelling to in case you need support while abroad.



- Don't forget to pack a camera (or your mobile phone charger if you have a camera phone) so that you can take photos of your holiday! This might be particularly important if you have memory problems and may forget your precious holiday memories.
- Keep a notebook or page in a safe place containing emergency contact details and any other important details such as your travel insurance providers' emergency number and your policy number.

## Other considerations

- Consider the security of your home while you are away. You may wish to make arrangements for somebody you trust to visit your home while you are away for security reasons.
- If you find it difficult to cope in busy, noisy or crowded environments, contact any attractions you are planning on visiting to find out when they are most quiet. Some places may have quieter hours when it might be easier for you to visit.
- Try to pace your activities while you are on holiday so that you can take breaks in between to avoid getting fatigued.
- While some people enjoy an alcoholic drink while on holiday, be aware that alcohol tolerance can reduce after brain injury. More information on this is available in our factsheet [Alcohol after brain injury](#).
- If you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), be aware that this may not be valid after Brexit.
- Be aware that travelling can sometimes be a stressful process and there may occasionally be delays. If you have problems with managing anger and feel you may have an anger episode while travelling, see our booklet [Managing anger after brain injury](#) in advance for useful tips on coping with anger issues.

## Financial support

There are a number of schemes that offer discounts on travel within the UK. For instance, a Disabled Person's Railcard gives up to a third off rail tickets; more information on this is available on [www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/](http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/).

You may be able to get a bus pass offering free bus travel, this would be issued by your local council.

Depending on your circumstances, some organisations may offer financial assistance to



help towards holiday costs. The Useful organisations section of this factsheet on page 6 lists some organisations that can assist with this.

Under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act 1970, anyone with a disability or family with a disabled member has the right to approach their local social services department concerning assistance in making holiday arrangements. Unfortunately, in practice, holidays are often a low priority for social services due to budget restrictions - but it is always worth asking.

## Travel insurance

The companies listed below all provide insurance cover for travellers with a disability.

Headway does not endorse any of the following companies. Their details are provided for information purposes only.

It is always important to shop around to get the best possible cover for your situation and be sure that any policy you do take out meets your needs.

Remember, if you do not declare everything about your medical history, the company may refuse to pay out even if you make a claim.

- Policy Direct  
Available through Headway's website by visiting [www.headway.org.uk/about-brain-injury/individuals/practical-issues/holidays-and-travel/](http://www.headway.org.uk/about-brain-injury/individuals/practical-issues/holidays-and-travel/)
- All Clear Travel Insurance  
[www.allcleartravel.co.uk/](http://www.allcleartravel.co.uk/)  
0808 164 8110
- American Express  
[www.insurance.americanexpress.co.uk/travel-insurance/?inav=gb\\_menu\\_insurance\\_travel\\_all](http://www.insurance.americanexpress.co.uk/travel-insurance/?inav=gb_menu_insurance_travel_all)  
0800 028 7573
- Direct Travel Insurance  
[www.direct-travel.co.uk](http://www.direct-travel.co.uk)  
0330 880 3600
- Free Spirit Travel Insurance  
[www.freespirittravelinsurance.com](http://www.freespirittravelinsurance.com)  
02392 419 080
- JD Travel  
[www.jdtravelinsurance.co.uk/](http://www.jdtravelinsurance.co.uk/)  
0344 247 4749



- M&S Travel Insurance  
[www.bank.marksandspencer.com/insurance/travel-insurance/](http://www.bank.marksandspencer.com/insurance/travel-insurance/)  
0800 051 3236
- Tesco Bank Insurance  
[www.tescobank.com/travel-insurance/existing-customers/](http://www.tescobank.com/travel-insurance/existing-customers/)  
0345 293 9475
- The Insurance Surgery  
[www.the-insurance-surgery.co.uk](http://www.the-insurance-surgery.co.uk)  
0800 083 2829

## Useful organisations

- 3H - Helping Hands for Holidays  
Helps with arranging holidays and provides grants for disabled people  
[www.3hfund.org.uk/](http://www.3hfund.org.uk/)  
01892 860 207  
info@3hfund.org.uk
- Access at Last  
Offers wheelchair accessible holidays  
[www.accessatlast.com/](http://www.accessatlast.com/)
- Calvert Trust  
Offers a number of accessible activities through a network of centres  
[www.calvert-trust.org.uk/](http://www.calvert-trust.org.uk/)
- Disabled Access Holidays.com  
Offers assistance with transport, accommodation and booking holidays for people with a disability  
[www.disabledaccessholidays.com/default.asp](http://www.disabledaccessholidays.com/default.asp)  
0800 622 6000/ 0141 248 9400  
info@disabledaccessholidays.com
- Disabled Holiday Guide  
An online directory to help with arranging a holiday with a disability  
[www.disabilityholidaysguide.com/disabled-holiday-directory.aspx#sthash.aQDV2Rf.3jDqNioh.dpbs](http://www.disabilityholidaysguide.com/disabled-holiday-directory.aspx#sthash.aQDV2Rf.3jDqNioh.dpbs)
- Family Fund  
Provides grants to help with the cost of holidays for disabled young people  
[www.familyfund.org.uk/](http://www.familyfund.org.uk/)  
01904 5500 055



- Family Holiday Association  
Can assist families struggling with disability with arranging breaks  
[www.familyholidayassociation.org.uk/](http://www.familyholidayassociation.org.uk/)  
020 3117 0650
- Jumbulance  
Assists with arranging accessible travel for holidays, short trips and day trips within the UK and Europe  
[www.jumbulance.org.uk](http://www.jumbulance.org.uk)  
01582 765 423  
info@jumbulance.org.uk
- Motability - Rough Guide to Accessible Britain  
A guide offering information about accessible holiday destinations across Britain  
[www.motability.co.uk/news/rough-guide-to-accessible-britain/](http://www.motability.co.uk/news/rough-guide-to-accessible-britain/)
- Revitalise  
Provides breaks and holidays for people with disabilities  
[www.revitalise.org.uk/respice-holidays/](http://www.revitalise.org.uk/respice-holidays/)  
0303 303 0145
- Tourism For All  
Offers directories of accommodation, things to do and food and drink to help with planning an accessible holiday  
[www.tourismforall.co.uk](http://www.tourismforall.co.uk)
- Turn2Us  
Offers a grant search tool to help with finding grants to provide financial assistance with arranging holidays  
<https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk/>

## Conclusion

We hope that the information provided in this factsheet helps you with preparing for and going on a holiday that meets your interests and needs. Remember that with careful planning and pacing of activities, it is possible to enjoy a holiday even after sustaining a brain injury and there are many different holiday providers that can help with arranging this.

If you have any feedback on this factsheet, please share with us at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/hwpublications](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/hwpublications) or by contacting our Publications and Research Manager at [publications@headway.org.uk](mailto:publications@headway.org.uk).

For more information and tips on living with brain injury, visit our Information Library at [www.headway.org.uk/information-library](http://www.headway.org.uk/information-library).