

### ***Food for Thought***

If spices trigger a migraine, or lactose causes you to have stomach pain, it may be best to try the local cuisine in small doses. Keep in mind that caffeine and alcohol can cause feelings of fatigue.

### ***Final Thoughts***

With a little preparation, it is possible to feel good while traveling even with chronic pain. New places and faces can provide a welcome distraction and help replace thoughts of pain with pleasurable memories. So above all, enjoy the opportunity to travel. Have a safe and happy trip!

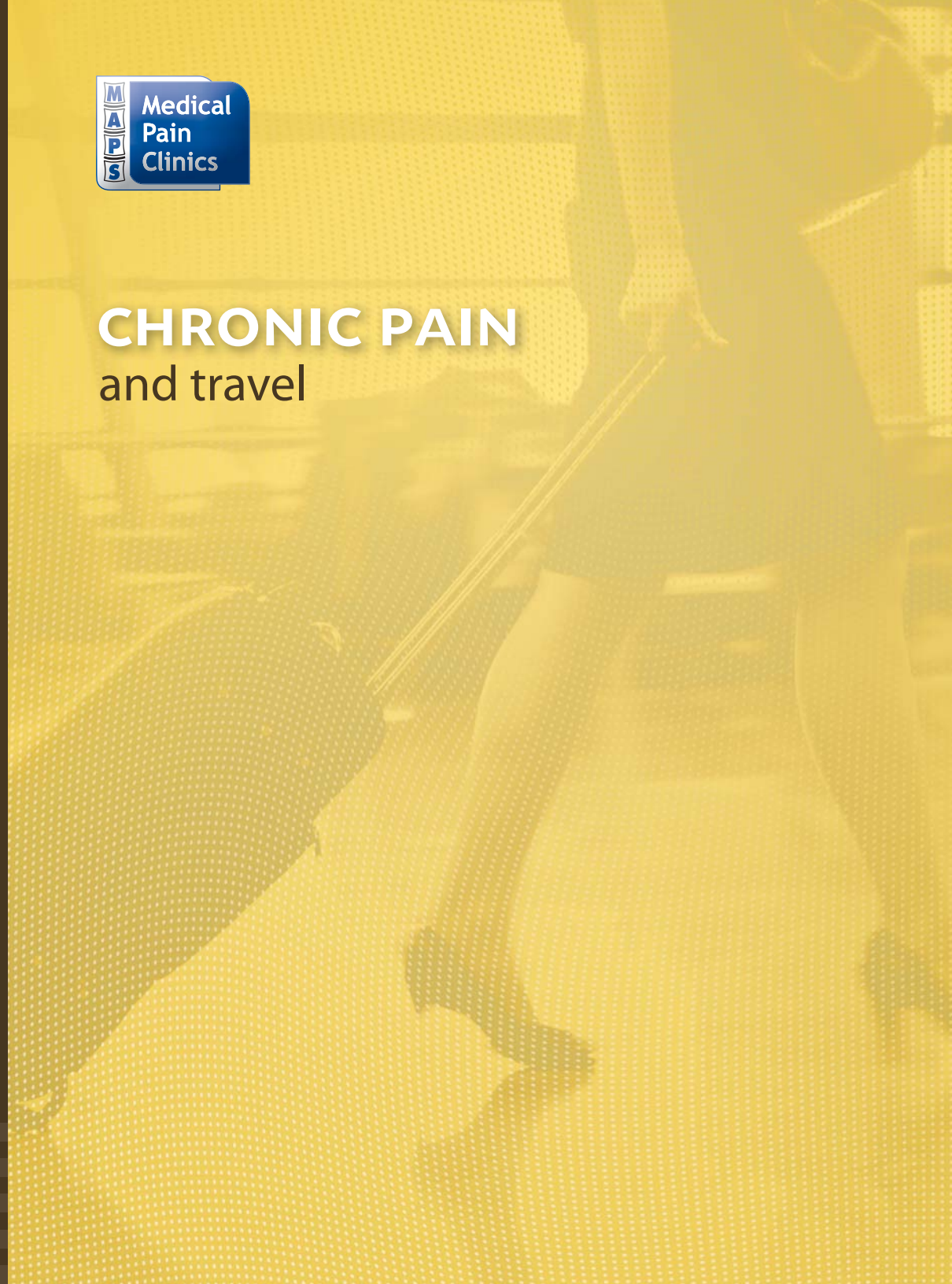


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LIVING HEALTHY WITH CHRONIC PAIN



## CHRONIC PAIN and travel



# CHRONIC PAIN AND TRAVEL

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For people with chronic pain, the thought of travel can be clouded with worry about the effect that changes in routine and environment will have on the ability to manage pain. The truth is that with a little pre-planning, chronic pain can be managed well when far from home. In this issue of Living Healthy with Chronic Pain, we have provided some simple tips for remaining comfortable on your journey.

## Tip #1 - A good start can set the tone for the whole trip

One way to avoid the stress and fatigue that can make chronic pain feel worse is to get organized. Make a list of what you will need and arrangements to be made at work and home before departure. Decisions about pet care, mail and newspaper delivery, or how tasks at work will be delegated can be made far advance of your trip. Planning your wardrobe and necessities will help to avoid the hurried feeling of last minute shopping. With enough pre-planning, you can start out feeling rested and relaxed.

## Tip #2 - Keep luggage light to avoid strain

Climate, terrain and planned activities will be the main determinants of the clothing and footwear needed for your trip. Fortunately the internet has made this information easy to access. Pack clothing that can be mixed, matched and layered to help keep the amount of items to a minimum. Use rolling luggage and remember to distribute the weight evenly of any bags that you carry to avoid muscle strain.

## Tip #3 - Carry a brief health history

A brief health history, including a list of medications, dosages and the reason (diagnosis) for which you are using the medication is important to have.

A note from your healthcare provider may be necessary if you are carrying syringes and needles. When using public transportation such as air travel, check the policies and resources for medications that require refrigeration. Let airline agents and screeners know about implantable devices and artificial joints to avoid problems getting through security screening.

## Tip #4 - Count your medications

Make a list of medications, medical supplies and the amount you will need. If needing an early refill of medication, smooth the process by contacting your health care provider well in advance of travel. Also, notify your pharmacist if planning to pick up prescriptions in a different city. Prescription medications should be kept with you rather than packed in luggage. If going through security, medication should be properly labeled and kept in a re-sealable plastic bag.

## Tip #5 - Consider the method of transportation

It is easier to stop, stand and stretch when traveling by car than when traveling by airplane but regardless of the method of transportation, there are simple steps you can take to stay comfortable.



## When traveling by air:

- Choose non-stop flights when possible.
- Walk in the aisle when safe to do so. Did you know that aisle seats, bulk head seats and those in exit rows have more legroom? This is something to consider when making reservations.
- Use a cervical travel pillow for neck problems if taking a long flight.
- Avoid heavy carry-on luggage. Ask for assistance in lifting carry-on luggage in and out of overhead compartments to avoid strain.
- Exercise in the seated position. For example, rotation exercise for neck, ankles and wrists; shoulder rolls; flexion and extension of the knees, along with simply stretching can prevent muscles from becoming stiff and tight.

If traveling by air or out of the country, security guidelines and screening procedures must be considered. For those with an implanted pain device, such as a Spinal Cord Stimulator or Intrathecal Pain Pump, always carry the identification card provided when the device was implanted to show to security. While there is no problem with being screened in the usual manner, the security officer may choose to use a hand wand for persons with implanted medical devices.

The Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) website is the best resource for information. Knowing the requirements ahead of time can reduce stress. For information, check the For Travelers section at <http://www.tsa.gov/>

## When traveling by motor vehicle:

- Use a lumbar support. A rolled towel makes a great makeshift cushion.
- Map your route to avoid the stress of getting lost and to plan rest stops. Do not forget to spend a few minutes of your stop doing some light exercise.
- If renting a car, consider whether the model has the features you may want such as an adjustable steering wheel and headrest. Also consider whether it allows for easy loading and unloading of luggage.
- Avoid carrying your wallet, money clip, cell phone or other bulky items in your back pocket to decrease strain to the low back and sciatic area.
- Bring a cooler with ice packs for sore muscles.

## When taking a cruise:

- If needed, investigate accommodations for the handicapped such as handrails and grab bars through out the ship. This recommendation can be applied to train and bus travel as well.
- Ask whether all public levels of the ship, as well as ports along the route are easily accessed.

## When walking and hiking:

Travel generally involves a little more walking than our day-to-day activities. Even if hiking is not planned, a few of the same comfort principles apply.

- Know the terrain and plan your footwear accordingly. Appropriate footwear is important not only to avoid sore feet but also to lessen back strain and the risk for falls.
- Pace yourself. Chronic pain is more manageable with proper rest. Consider the amount of time planned for physical activity in comparison to your normal day. The weather should also be taken into account. If not accustomed to the climate, your body may need a little extra rest-time until it adjusts.