

Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP)



GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Traveling with a Child

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10 FAQs on TRAVELING WITH A CHILD

1. What precautions can we (parents) and our older kids take regarding food, drinking water, and hygiene while traveling?
2. What emergency medicines and articles we should carry in our kit to tide over situations such as diarrhea, vomiting, and fever?
3. How can we make travel with children safe and at the same time create an environment of fun for them?
4. I am a new mom, and am traveling with my baby for the first time, what are your advice?
5. What are the risks involved while traveling with my child both in India and abroad?
6. What advice would you give to my kids regarding motion sickness, air pressure changes, and jet lag during international travel?
7. I prefer to travel light with my baby yet would not like to miss out on any important items I may need for him. Please give me some advice.
8. I run a foster care center. What are your points of advice for traveling with a child with special needs—asthma, convulsions, mentally and physically challenged kids, and children with congenital heart disease?
9. Kindly guide how to travel safe during pregnancy.
10. What extra precautions do you advise for travel during coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic?

Under the Auspices of the IAP Action Plan 2020–2021

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Traveling with a Child

Q1

What precautions can we (parents) and our older kids take regarding food, drinking water, and hygiene while traveling?

You should carry plenty of boiled and cooled water procured from a safe source with intact seal. It is better to avoid ice cubes of unknown source. Favorite homemade snacks are desirable. Use only safe, hot, and hygienic food. For older kids try to keep a familiar food routine. Washing hands frequently with soap and water or use sanitizers, if handwashing facilities are not available. Food should be steaming hot, freshly cooked and it is best to be cautious not to consume reheated food. At buffet, one should avoid raw food, cut and kept salads or fruits.

It should be a big *NO* to street foods.

We should always have snacks available for kids, as hunger makes a kid cranky and inconsolable.

Q2

What emergency medicines and articles we should carry in our kit to tide over situations such as diarrhea, vomiting, and fever?

- We should carry paracetamol as drops and syrups 125 mg/5 mL and 250 mg/5 mL as well as paracetamol tablets 500 mg for older kids. Ibuprofen suspension and tablets for older children are also desirable to be carried.
- Domperidone/Ondansetron syrup and tablets for nausea and vomiting
- A digital thermometer in working condition
- An itching lotion, antiseptic lotion, and sunscreen lotion. Insect repellents and band-Aids.
- Oral rehydration solutions (ORS) powder and sachets
- It is best not to carry antibiotics unless your child is already on it. Antidiarrheal medicines are best avoided. You can take care of diarrhea by controlling food intake, proper diet, rehydration with ORS, and zinc supplements. Diarrhea with blood will need antibiotics; consult your doctor.
- Usual drugs your child may be taking as prescribed by your pediatrician should be carried.

Q3

How can we make travel with children safe and at the same time create an environment of fun for them?

- Your child's vaccination schedule should be up-to-date, any missing vaccines should be done at least 72 hours before travel. Family travel insurance papers should be in place. Always try to keep kids close to adults in the family. You should have a recovery plan in an unforeseen situation of a lost child. Try and keep children away from wild animals.
- Older children should be involved in planning travel and going over an outline of the trip and recording of memories in notebook.
- Checking-in at airports, going through security, buying snacks and drinks, and boarding the plane can be fun for kids when they have prior information.
- Surprise your child with a new toy, bring some school supplies, and download music or audio books.
- Kids should be aware that things may go wrong in unforeseen situations; prepare them.
- Try to pre-book everything possible—besides tickets and hotel, private and public transportation, sightseeing tours, private guides, tickets for museums, theme parks, and other areas. Explain the trip to children. Some games such as a magnetic game, pack of cards, and a camera can keep kids occupied and happy.
- Avoid screen time and indulge in "nature" study.
- Do not make a very hasty schedule, leave plenty of time for adjustment. A flexible plan causes less stress for you and your family and leads to a happier trip overall.
- We must remember that when kids are uncomfortable, they are not happy, and if there are too many new things going on kids may become irritable or cranky.



Q4

I am a new mom, and am traveling with my baby for the first time, what are your advice?

You should exclusively breastfeed your baby at least up to 6 months of age (privacy may be an issue especially in public places). Avoid bottle-feeds, these may cause infections. Please ensure that you have sufficient stock of nappies and wipes and some essential medicines as may be needed. You need to pack a change of clothes for yourself. It is important to select a suitable seat for yourself and baby. Aisle seat is preferable. Use of a travel neck pillow and a nursing pillow is helpful.

If your baby cries, the chances of which are high, the most important thing is *not* to worry. You may try to feed the baby or administer paracetamol drops or anticolic medicine as per need. Do not feel guilty for other passengers, because they would understand what traveling *alone* with a baby means.

If in a flight, feed can be prepared with assistance from the flight attendant. A bassinet can be requested for infants up to 18 months of age or else a separate seat is desirable with seat belts for older children. Diaper change table can be used in the lavatory and immediate disposal of the diaper in closed bags. If your child is crying, he may be having an earache, you need not make him feel guilty, help him to calm, give medicine for pain if needed.

Q5

What are the risks involved while traveling with my child both in India and abroad?

- The common risk factors involved in traveling are sickness, accidents, antisocial elements, thieves, loss of belonging, and missing of essential documents.
- Local travel by trains and buses may involve overcrowding. Keep your child close to you at all time. Beware of pick-pockets.
- Food and water hygiene to be followed diligently. Prevent coughs and colds by wearing masks.
- To prevent mosquito menace, carry appropriate repellents.
- Travel insurance plan is a must.

Q6

What advice would you give to my kids regarding motion sickness, air pressure changes, and jet lag during international travel?

- Your child should avoid being empty stomach during travel. Ask them to focus on objects straight ahead which may help. Prefer to get window seats, anti-nausea medication like domperidone may help.
- For jet lag, you may try to plan travel during sleeping hours of the child if your child sleeps well on planes. Some families prefer flying during the day to arrive at night and then get a full night's sleep at the destination or prefer to change the sleep habits 3 days before, especially in long zone air travel.
- One can have a "Family Jet Lag Party" to turn the dreaded effects of jet lag into a family fun activity on arrival.
- There should be plenty of fresh air and light in the new environment to help kids settle in faster. For pressure, changes give something to eat or chew-like chewing gum during take-offs and landing.
- Children should be told to respect local customs and laws. Dress code as appropriate and they should be made aware of conduct in public places. Take this opportunity to go over your expectations for their behavior throughout the trip. Detail on how they should act on planes, hotels, and on tours. Cracking a joke around security checks can be a hazardous experience.



Q7

I prefer to travel light with my baby yet would not like to miss out on any important items I may need for him. Please give me some advice.

Yes, you should carry sufficient stock of milk, packed food, and water. Babies and older kids should be dressed appropriately to the climate conditions. Nappies, wipes, toys, paracetamol drops, and medicines for colic pain should be packed. An extra bit of baggage is better than feeling sorry at the time of need.

Sometimes borrowing or renting items at a destination place is a great way to travel light.

Q8

I run a foster care center. What are your points of advice for traveling with a child with special needs—asthma, convulsions, mentally and physically challenged kids, and children with congenital heart disease?

- My first advice for these children with special needs is to handle them with utmost care; it can be scary for them in crowded places.
- Take appropriate inhalers and spacers for children with asthma, anticonvulsant that a child may be on, in addition emergency drugs that may be needed, rectal midazolam nasal spray, and cardiac drugs as appropriately advised by pediatrician.
- Mentally challenged kids can be difficult to handle from seating in one place; we can try taking rear end seats.
- Take extra care with kids with sickle cell disease as they may need oxygen at high altitudes.
- We should inform airlines of special situations ahead. Children with type 1 diabetes may need extra care during long zone travels.

Q9

Kindly guide how to travel safe during pregnancy.

The best option is to avoid travel during pregnancy. If essential, it is safe to travel by air before 36 weeks of pregnancy. Enough time should be allowed so that there is no rush during check-in and in the flight itself. You should take all the prescribed medicines with you. Try to have a seat with good leg space; you should walk up and down the aisle every 2–3 hours on long flights to avoid the possibility of clots in the veins.

If you wish to undertake road travel, you should avoid bumpy roads, travel at lesser speed, take frequent stops, and hydrate yourself with fluids and proper light meals. If there is an option between rail and road journeys, perhaps the rail route is better provided the connectivity of your stations permit.



Q10
What extra precautions do you advise for travel during coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic?

- You should travel with children only if it is a must during a pandemic.
- Traveling in your own vehicle is the safest option to reduce exposure to outsiders. Let older children understand details of travel for themselves.
- We need strollers for infants and toddlers, check if they can be taken via security checks. Book a separate seat for a child for his comfort, seat belts must be appropriately fastened. Pack some toys, crayons, reading books (light ones), and earphones for listening to music.
- In road travel by car have a break every 2 hours, use car seats on the rear, and keep young ones occupied when awake—by using toys, storytelling, and sing along ideas.
- We should never leave a child alone anytime, especially in a closed car.
- We should equip the older child with emergency contact details.
- Make them aware of proper hand hygiene, sanitization, physical distancing, and wearing masks. Children should be made aware of covering their face while coughing and sneezing.
- Follow quarantine rules of different cities and countries as appropriate.
- Carry safe water, healthy snacks, and hand wipes.
- Beware of the possibility of abduction, abuse, goons in certain areas.
- Children should be told to say a strict *NO* to strangers—If by mistake be alone/lost, ask them to take help from uniformed police.