

# Preparation is Key When Traveling This Summer

*By Eric Jones, M.D.*

**Q: We have lots of family traveling to do this summer, and I know traveling with kids can be tricky. Any tips on making family travel easier?**

A: Preparation is KEY when traveling as a family, whether it's a day trip or a visit to another country, and the preparation should start long before the car pulls out of the driveway. Get your kids involved by encouraging them to flip through guidebooks, brochures or websites. Something is sure to catch their attention and get them excited about going somewhere new. If you're traveling internationally, learn some handy phrases in that country's language, and practice them around the house. Especially popular (and useful) phrases are those involving the nearest restroom, where to get a drink, and where to get something familiar to eat.

The next things to prepare before travel are your own expectations and attitudes. We all know that traveling with kids IS going to be stressful, and that bumps WILL come up in the road. If your kids see you handling mishaps with grace and poise, they are going to handle the occasional flight delay or late meal with much more aplomb themselves. Try to think of each trip as an adventure, and each issue that arises as one more experience you all can laugh about when the dust settles.

Packing well for your trip can make or break your travel experience. Imagine finding yourself without a diaper while on an airboat ride in the Everglades, or without a spare shirt if your little tyke decides to throw up on you in Paris. Try to anticipate as much as possible, while still packing as light as possible. That's a tall order, but a few items are indispensable. First, make sure to pack some Children's Tylenol or other fever reducer. You never know when you might need it, and relieving that fever often means relieving the irritability and low energy levels that come along with it. I also recommend traveling with small bottles of Children's Benadryl, just in case someone develops a rash or the sniffles. Make sure you pack any prescription medicines your child may need, including the ones he or she uses

infrequently, like inhalers or nasal sprays. Many travel experts I know recommend one further item: baby wipes. Even if you have teenagers, you'll find them asking you to bring out the wipes on hot days to cool off quickly, or to wipe the ice cream off their hands. Plus, you can use them to clean off cafe tables, benches, toilet seats, or any other "iffy" surface.

Now for the actual traveling! Plan your trip with your kids' schedules in mind. It's always a good idea to leave the house (or ground) around nap time so that the little people sleep during the boring parts; this prevents are-we-there-yet syndrome. Choosing the right distractions can also make the difference between peace and irritated co-passengers on those long flights. I would suggest packing a few "old favorites" that you know will keep junior entertained, as well as some new, never-before-seen items to unveil when the going gets rough. For big kids, I find portable DVD players and iPods invaluable as well.

Some of the best memories your family will share are going to center around time spent traveling together, whether to Miami or Europe. Make the most out of these special times with some advance planning, a relaxed attitude, and a few good toys or books. Happy trails!

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