

Travelling by air

Having a heart child shouldn't stop you and your family from flying abroad. Here are some useful tips to consider before taking off. Please note, airport security is constantly being updated so you should check everything with the airport and airline before flying – your travel agent should be able to help.

- Solid medicines like powders or tablets should be allowed in the cabin in their original packaging
- Liquid medicine in quantities of less than 100ml are allowed as long as they are presented in a clear plastic resealable bag, separate from other toiletries. If you need to take more than this for the duration of the flight, contact your travel agent or the airline before flying, for approval. You may also need a letter from your doctor.
- Essential medical equipment should also be fine if you have supporting documentation from your cardiologist or GP. The equipment will need to fit into one item of hand luggage.
- INR strips (for testing blood) should be carried in your hand luggage as the temperature in the hold is very cold and could affect how the strips work.
- Make sure to register your child as disabled when you book your ticket. This is a good idea however you choose to travel because you're making the travel company aware of your circumstances. You can also let them know whether you need a wheelchair when you book your flight. Most travel agents are very happy to help with all of the arrangements, so make sure you give them lots of notice. They'll make sure you have priority boarding so you don't have to queue and book the best seats on the plane to give you lots of space. Never apologise for your heart child's condition – more often than not people will bend over backwards to help if they understand your situation.
- Get to the airport in plenty of time so that nobody's flustered and you can make sure you have everything you need. You can also enjoy having something to eat and drink before the flight, which is part of the fun!

Pacemakers

- If your child has a pacemaker, check with your doctor or cardiologist before flying to see if it contains metal. Some do, some don't. Always make sure airport security are aware of your child's pacemaker before going through airport screening areas.
- Ask your doctor or cardiologist for an official card that states your child has an implanted pacemaker. These cards warn security officials of hidden metal within the body.
- Don't travel too soon after an implant. Wait a while before deciding to go anywhere by car or plane. Your heart child needs time to rest and recuperate so talk to other heart parents about their experience and always consult a doctor or cardiologist before taking a holiday. Most heart children need at least 6 months to a year before travelling comfortably.