

Summer, Travel and Parkinson's Disease

During the warmer months, people with Parkinson's disease may need to take extra precautions to make the most of experiences while outdoors and on vacation. Here are five things to consider this summer:

1. Protect your skin.

People with Parkinson's have an increased risk of the skin cancer melanoma. Research is ongoing, but scientists believe genetics, environmental factors or immune system changes may be to blame. Always wear sunscreen when outdoors and see your dermatologist up to once a year to check for melanoma.

2. Stay hydrated.

Summer heat can cause dehydration and exacerbate low blood pressure, which is common in Parkinson's. Watch for dizziness, lightheadedness and fatigue. Doctors recommend at least six to eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day but you should drink more if you're outside for long periods or working up a sweat.

3. Anticipate medication needs.

A few weeks before vacation, check your medications, call for refills to cover the time you'll be away and update your medication list. Pack medications in their bottles. If flying, take them in your carry-on and if driving, don't leave them in a hot car. It's typically recommended to continue your same schedule, even if you switch time zones or travel overnight. But always talk to your doctor about how best to manage your medications.

4. Know about your deep brain stimulator.

If you have a deep brain stimulator (DBS), bring your patient programmer and device identification card when traveling. Most airports will screen you with a "pat down" check. The airport screening devices won't harm DBS, but could cause a momentary increase in stimulation or turn the device off. (You can turn it back on with your patient programmer.)

5. Explore local care options.

If you're going away for an extended period or live in another location for three to six months out of the year, consider establishing care with a local movement disorder specialist. Ask your doctor for a recommendation or search online for a movement disorder specialist in your area.



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