



Planning a Holiday with Your Heart Child

The aim of this information sheet is to give you information if you are planning on going on holiday with a child with a heart condition.

Choosing your destination

Choosing the right destination for your holiday is always important, but there are some additional factors you may need to consider including:

- temperature – will your child cope with very hot or cold weather?
- transport – will your child cope with long journeys, have problems with flying and so on?
- distance from hospital or heart unit. Is it important that your child can receive medical attention quickly?

Choosing your accommodation

Choosing the right accommodation may also be important. If your child gets tired easily or needs mobility assistance, you will probably want accommodation that is near to any facilities you are planning to use. If you are taking medicines or INR strips with you that you need to keep cool, make sure your accommodation has a fridge.

Travel Consultancy

The Children's Heart Federation has partnered with personal travel expert Jules Turner – with [Not Just Travel](#). Jules can help to plan your holiday without the hassle, with her experience, expert guidance and advice, Jules will create a perfect package tailored to your experience.

Plan your holidays in the knowledge that your contribution is championing children with heart conditions and their families as Jules Turner has pledged to donate 10% of her commission, just quote the magical code 'CHF' during your conversation. Get in touch if you'd like to hear more about how this works.

Information from your doctor and consultant

If you have any concerns about taking your child on holiday, contact your cardiac liaison nurse or cardiologist for advice.

Your insurance company may ask for a letter from your GP or cardiologist to confirm that your child is fit to travel. This letter might need to confirm that:

- your child is fit to travel;
- your child's health will not be put at risk by visiting your destination;
- your child is fit to fly; and
- your child's heart condition is stable.

You might also want to ask your cardiologist for a [letter](#) explaining your child's condition or your last clinic letter, which you could show to any medical staff if required while you were away. If you are going to a non English-speaking country, you may want to learn how to say that your child has a heart condition in



the local language. You could also write these words down and keep a note with you. Google Translate can also be a useful tool to translate documents, and it may be helpful to take a letter from your cardiologist or copy of a recent clinical letter translated into the local language.

Your cardiologist should be able to tell you where your nearest paediatric cardiac centre will be. You may want to take the address and contact details of this centre with you. It is always a good idea to have the contact details for your GP and cardiologist with you in case you need to get in touch urgently.

Medicines

Your GP can advise you about any prescribed medicines you need to take with you as well as any extra health precautions or vaccinations. Take plenty of all essential medications with you. If you are unfamiliar with local medicines, you might want to take things like rehydration sachets and children's paracetamol as well.

Flying with oxygen

There is less oxygen available in the air when you are on a plane, and this could cause the oxygen level in your blood to drop. Please contact your consultant to discuss whether or not it is safe to fly before you book your holiday. If you are not sure who to contact, then please call the Home Oxygen Service for advice. If you will require oxygen while on a plane, then contact the airline beforehand to arrange this. If you plan to take oxygen equipment with you on a plane then please contact Baywater Healthcare (0800 373580) and your airline beforehand to make sure it is safe to do so

Insurance

For most conditions you should have no problem in getting insurance cover for your child. Shop around to find the best deal and check carefully to see exactly what your insurance covers. Please note some insurance comparison sites allow you to add medical conditions as part of the quote process. Do not be afraid to ask lots of questions, especially 'What if...' questions. Most policies have a 24-hour emergency phone number. Take a copy of the policy with you and a note of the emergency phone number. E111 forms have now been replaced by The UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) You should have one of these to receive any healthcare needed when visiting a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland. You can apply for an EHIC on-line at www.ehic.org.uk or www.dh.gov.uk/travellers, by phone on 0845 606 2030 or at post offices. Remember this is not a replacement for health insurance.

List of Travel Insurance Providers

Medical screening line

The insurer may ask you to speak to the medical screening line. Be prepared to answer questions on your destination, how long you will be away, your child's date of birth, the name of their heart condition and how stable the condition is.

Stability is a major question for insurers. To check how stable your child's condition is, you may be asked questions such as:

- what medication your child is on;
- the dosage;



- whether the dosage has recently changed;
- dates of admissions to hospital; and
- dates when you have had to go to A and E.

You may also need to describe what symptoms your child experiences.

Packing before a flight

There are strict rules about what you can take in your hand baggage on flights. These rules can vary according to the security situation at the time you fly and which airline you choose. If you are in any doubt, the best advice is to contact the airline beforehand and ask.

Solid medicines like powders or tablets should be allowed in the cabin but make sure everything stays in its original packaging.

Liquid medicine in quantities of less than 100ml are usually fine, you can take more than 100mls of liquid medication through in your hand luggage. It should be prescribed with the pharmacy labels visible. You should also show your NHS repeat slips to prove that it is prescribed. Present the bag separately for examination at the airport security point, security may swab the bottles as an additional security check.

Essential medical equipment should also be fine if you have supporting documents from your cardiologist or GP. It will need to fit into your one item of hand baggage.

If you are travelling with an INR (blood monitoring) machine, carry the monitor and the strips in your hand luggage. The temperature in the baggage compartment of the aircraft can fall below freezing, which may affect how the strips work.

Groups that provide family holidays

For many families caring for a child with complex health needs it can be extremely difficult to contemplate being able to afford or organise a holiday with appropriate care in place. However, a short activity break for your child or a holiday together can be immensely rewarding and can enable your child and your family to build some special memories to treasure.

There are several charities which organise holidays for a seriously ill child, either with their family or on their own with a group of other children/ young people. These are provided in the UK or overseas, and different criteria may apply depending on the scheme.

Family Fund

Help families across the UK who are raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person aged 17 or under.

Find out about the different programmes delivered by Family Fund and which ones are relevant to you.

Website: <https://www.familyfund.org.uk/>

Heswall Disabled Child Holiday Fund

This holiday camp has evolved over the years under different leaderships, however the ethos has always remained the same – to provide free holidays to disabled children aged 9-15 in the North West of England.

Information sheet



For general enquiries contact via email: committee@heswallcamp.org.uk

If you know a disabled child, aged 9 – 15 years, who might like to join the annual camp please email: applications@heswallcamp.org.uk www.heswallcamp.org.uk

The Henry Smith Charity

The Holiday Grants programme provides grants for recreational trips and holidays for groups of children aged 13 and under in the UK who are disabled or disadvantaged.

Website: <https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/explore-our-grants-and-apply/holiday-grants-for-children/holiday-grants-for-children-overview/>

Over the Wall

Provide children, young people and families facing serious health challenges with the opportunity to attend residential camps in communities across the UK.

Website: <https://www.otw.org.uk/>

The Children's Hope Foundation

The Children's Hope Foundation offers holidays and short breaks for families with children aged 3-17 with special needs for a nominal charge. The charity's caravan houses up to eight people and is in Camber Sands, East Sussex.

www.childrenshopefoundation.org.uk/caravan.html

The Oliver Curd Trust

The Oliver Curd Trust provides free holidays for families with children who have a life limiting or life-threatening illness. The charity also provides breaks to bereaved families.

www.theolivercurdtrust.org/caravans.html

The Calvert Trust

Enables people with disabilities, together with their families and friends, to achieve their potential through the challenge of outside activities. Activities include canoeing, abseiling, swimming or sliding down a zip wire. The Calvert Trust does not charge a fee for their holidays.

Please visit the following websites for a full price list and more information on their centres in Exmoor, Kielder and the Lake District.

Exmoor: <https://calvertexmoor.org.uk>

Kielder: <https://calvertkielder.org.uk>

Lake District: <https://calvertlakes.org.uk>

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Sandcastle Trust

The Sandcastle Trust provides grants to families affected by a rare genetic condition for short breaks, special days and annual attraction passes. They also offer support to families who have suffered a bereavement as a result of a rare genetic condition.

www.sandcastletrust.org/sandcastleretreats

Evidence and sources of information for this CHF information sheet can be obtained at:

(1) UK: *Applying for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)*

There will be no change to the rights and status of EU nationals living in the UK, nor UK nationals living in the EU, while the UK remains in the EU. London: GOV.UK; 2017. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card>

(2) NHS Choices. London: NHS; 2017. Available at:

www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/pages/about-the-ehic.aspx

(3) NHS Business Services Authority

Tel: 0300 330 1350

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To inform CHF of a comment or suggestion, please contact us via info@chfed.org.uk or Tel: 0300 561 0065

Caring for children with heart conditions

Information sheet



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