

RR19

“from a seed a flower blooms as do people who blossom in life”



EATING DISORDER SUPPORT SERVICE

Travelling Abroad and Eating Disorders

As with all of our documents, if there is nothing readily available, SEED will research and put together something that might just help people prepare for the event ahead!

Insurance cover

As with any illness (physical or mental) health must be disclosed to the Insurer or you may find that, if are taken ill, and you haven't disclosed the nature of your disability, you may be liable to high costs and no valid insurance.

The EHIC card (formerly E111) <http://www.e111.org.uk/about.html>

Can be applied for free of charge via <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic.aspx> do not apply on line if there is an administration fee attached to the application.

In Summary, the EHIC will cover:

- Any medical treatment that becomes necessary during your stay because of either illness or an accident.
- The card gives access to reduced-cost or free medical treatment from state healthcare providers.
- It allows you to be treated on the same basis as a resident of the country you are visiting i.e. you may have to pay a patient contribution (also known as a co-payment). You may be able to seek reimbursement for this when you are back in the UK if you are not able to do so in the other country (and limited to the equivalent cost on the NHS).
- It includes treatment of a chronic or pre-existing medical condition that becomes necessary during your visit.
- It includes routine maternity care, (provided the reason for your visit is not specifically to give birth).
- It includes the provision of oxygen, renal dialysis and routine medical care.

It does not cover:

- The EHIC is not a substitute or replacement for private travel insurance. You should always take out an appropriate private policy in addition to carrying your EHIC.
- It will not cover the costs of private healthcare or services that are not part of the state healthcare system.
- It will not cover the costs of being brought back to the UK.
- It will not allow you to go abroad to specifically receive treatment (including going abroad to give birth).
- The card may not be used in some regions, as there may be no state provided healthcare available.

Gap Year

Eating Disorders has a high prevalence between the ages of 19/25 and in particular University Students. It is often necessary for students to opt out of studies until they are stronger and have gained management over their illness. To even think about a gap year if you are suffering from an eating disorder would be disastrous. To take a gap year you need to be physically strong should you need to do casual work to earn money. Physically fit to be able to enjoy the adventure and mentally focused for the journey ahead. It may be much more beneficial to take a year out to concentrate on getting back to your old self before the eating disorder ever started, bit by bit gaining management back over your wellbeing!

Long Haul Flights

Long Haul entail long flights – you will be unable to take your own food on board and as much as some airlines feed you very well on Long Haul flights you may find yourself way out of your ‘comfort’ zone for several hours, with the possibility of becoming medically at risk due to poor nutrition. If you are the type of person who needs to snack regularly this may be a problem.

If you suffer from travel sickness this will make your eating problems worse and, if excessively sick may cause you to be dehydrated or may affect your potassium levels.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/low-potassium/basics/causes/sym-20050632>

Vaccinations

Long Haul usually means extra precautions when it comes to visiting other countries. Do check thoroughly if you need injections prior to the holiday. Some people have reactions and may feel unwell due to having them in the first place!

Plan ahead

Get your doctor to prescribe anti-sickness pills or if you opt for the herbal approach chew pickled or crystallised ginger.

Eating and Holiday Accommodation

These days **All Inclusive** is a very popular choice especially for families. Fixed mealtimes and eating in front of others may be difficult – faced with huge choices of food may be overwhelming and faced with huge amounts of food may cause you to spiral ‘out of control’ and be unable to curb your appetite! The knock on effect of this may lead to medical risk.

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/iop/depts/pm/research/eatingdisorders/resources/GUIDETOMEDICALRISKASSESSMENT.pdf> Larger hotels may have room service so this may be an option to consider if you wish to eat in privacy. Remember you may be paying more for this service.

Room Only is when you pay for the room on a bed only basis. All meals are bought or sought either within the hotel or in restaurants, pubs or bars. Anxieties may be heightened if you are having to trawl the street scrutinizing menus, or being harassed by proprietors to eat at their restaurant.

Half Board is Bed Breakfast and Evening Meal. Ok for convenience but still faced with buffet style eating with others. May be beneficial with lots of salad choices but there is always the chance the food is not to your liking and you find you struggle to eat much at all.

Self-Catering can be the safe choice as it gives you flexibility to eat when you want – and you chose how you prepare the food. The down side is if you are travelling alone you may not eat enough and become medically unwell.

18 to thirty's

Phew – what can I say. Party hard and party long! Sun Sea and A and E beckons! Everyone likes to have a good time but I would say stay clear of the lads and lasses group holidays! The day doesn't exist and the nights are endless! Often young people don't party until 12.00 midnight and they do the 'walk of shame' at 8.00am not a good look! **Do you have the stamina to do that?**

Eating Out

If you **plan ahead** and **research** the hotel in which you are staying you may be able to come up with a plan that suits you. Consider not going away for a fortnight - try 7 days – mentally this may help knowing you are not out of your 'comfort' zone for too long! I am sure if you are travelling with family they will understand the difficulties you face but with support and a little TLC there is no need for this to spoil your holiday and everyone else around you! Dining out in Cafes and Restaurants is one of the pleasure of a holiday.

Don't be afraid to say you are struggling – you should not be made to feel pressured – talking your concerns through before going away may help you and may help others to understand what is happening for you.

What if I become unwell?

You may not have as much energy as other people on the holiday – heat is exhausting even if you are healthy person. If you feel lightheaded have a fruit drink or suck on a couple sweet this will help your blood sugar to increase. Keep in the shade in the height of the day between 12 noon and 3.00pm. Use a high sun factor protection and drink plenty of water and try and keep the alcohol to a minimum. Easier said than done but if you do feel poorly – let someone know and be firm about when you have had enough to drink!

Your EHIC card must be on you, if you present to the doctor or the hospital whilst abroad – otherwise you may find you are having to pay for your treatment – Also make sure the hospital you are walking into to is NHS equivalent and not Private!!!

A genuinely relaxing holiday can help to de-stress you away from the environment of work. Don't let others pressure you into something you are not happy to do – this is your holiday too and you should feel at ease and relaxed in other people's company. You are allowed to have fun! Just be careful having it!

Finally, there is no right or wrong way to experience a holiday. Just take it easy and let events unfold as they will. Even if you do nothing but sit in the sun, the chances are that you'll feel better for it.

Links:

<http://findinghappinessandhealth.wordpress.com/2012/05/29/what-being-abroad-is-like-when-you-have-an-eating-disorder-history/>

<http://www.b-eat.co.uk/get-help/online-community/young-people/recovery-stories/travelling-with-an-eating-disorder/>

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