



“The New Airline Guidelines”

Tips for Travelers with Sjögren's Syndrome

The TSA issued new restrictions for airline travel on August 10, 2006, which could have a profound effect on travelers who have Sjögren's syndrome. TSA also periodically provides clarification or changes to their guidelines, so visit the TSA website (<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/>) or call your airline before traveling. For example, a new rule was issued August 13th allowing non-prescription medically necessary liquids up to 4 ounces. Policies apply to all domestic and international flights originating in the U.S.

The SSF encourages you to use this opportunity to educate the TSA and airlines personnel about Sjögren's syndrome. At the same time, please remember that the federal government and airlines must balance safety concerns with medical needs, so respectfully follow the guidelines while politely asserting your needs.

TSA GUIDELINES:

The TSA currently prohibits all liquids, gels, ointments, and aerosols in carryon luggage. You may have these items in checked luggage, but you may not have them on your person or in any carryon bags. For the Sjögren's syndrome patient, this means you cannot have beverages such as water or liquid, ointment, gels, or balms used to lubricate the eyes, nose, mouth, or lips. **The exception is that you may have medically necessary liquid, and for Sjögren's that means eye drops and saline in containers smaller than 4 oz. are fine.** Additionally, any prohibited items purchased beyond the security checkpoint will not be permitted on board the aircraft – including water!

TRAVEL TIPS:

Below are a few travel tips compiled from various sources over the past few days. We hope that some of them may help make your travel more comfortable.

1. Carry brochures on Sjögren's syndrome, dry mouth, and dry eye, or take a website printout from the SSF at www.sjogrens.org describing Sjögren's. This will provide an authoritative source on Sjögren's and help explain your situation.
2. Get a prescription or note from your physician on letterhead stating that you have Sjögren's syndrome and listing the items you need to have with you. This will demonstrate a formal diagnosis and explain your needs to airline personnel.

3. Have your physician call in your eye drops and other medically necessary items as a prescription. Prescriptions are allowed on board if the name on the prescription label matches the name on your ticket and identification.
4. Bring an empty water bottle with you and ask the flight attendant to fill it when you board. If they won't fill the water bottle, ask immediately for a bottle of their water. Explain your condition to them and how important water is to you. Present them with a brochure – so as to help increase awareness at the same time.
5. Bring sugar free candies, gum, and/or juicy fruit on board to stay moist.
6. If you use salagen or evoxac, ask your doctor about taking it before boarding.
7. Consider purchasing water at the gift shop after you've gone through security, and show the unopened bottle and receipt to the gate attendant if they question you. This may not be allowed, so be prepared to throw away the water.
8. Consider seeing if the Duty Free Shop at your airline sells water, other beverages, or any of the items you need. If so, these items will be delivered to your flight and are allowed on board.
9. Carry single vial eye drops unopened and in the original packet.
10. Carry a wet washcloth in a zip loc bag to place on your eyes.
11. Pack medically necessary products in a clear bag separate from other carry-on items to make inspection easier and faster. X-rays will not damage medications.
12. And last but not least – arrive early at the airport and talk to security. Remain calm and explain your situation. If you have documentation and information, you are more likely to receive the help you need. And remember – you are helping to spread awareness about Sjögren's syndrome!

And once you arrive at your destination,

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE NEEDED ITEMS AT YOUR DESTINATION:

While you can send items banned for carry-on but needed at your destination in your checked luggage, what if your bag doesn't arrive at your destination? Sjögren's syndrome patients know that finding specific eye drops or other necessary items in locations far from home can be difficult if not impossible. Consider mailing items to your destination before you leave, but remember that prescription items might need documentation or special Customs forms. Also consider using two smaller bags instead of one large suitcase and including necessities in each bag. That way, if one bag is lost, at least you'll have the other bag.

The Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation thanks its members for contacting us with their suggestions and travel stories. Please continue to share them by calling 1-800-475-6473 or emailing us at ssf@sjogrens.org