

Tips for abstinent travel

Abstinent members can be happy travelers. Program is portable, and with some planning, an abstinent trip is completely within your reach. Here are some tips from frequent abstinent world travelers.

Packing your traveling Abstinence Kit

Items to consider including for measuring:

- Collapsible ½ and 1/3 cup cups – most useful sizes and not bulky
- 1 teaspoon measure (don't take the whole spoon set unless they nest) – but know the weight of your fats! It will save a lot of mess
 - don't count on finding light margarine or olive oil! You will mostly be using your teaspoon to measure fats
- Travel-sized scale (the Joseph Joseph scale is very good)

Travel foods:

- Packaged nuts – great for fats and/or proteins when you can't get other items
- Packaged dried fruit - critical for getting your fruits in case you can't find fresh – goes well with cereal and work very well when you are going to a place where you cannot eat fresh fruit due to sanitary concerns
- Packaged plain oatmeal
- Flip-top cans of beans that do not need a can opener (in checked suitcase only)
- Foil packages of tuna

Other handy items:

- Packets of sweetener, pepper, mayonnaise or salad dressing
- Packets of lactose pills if dairy is a problem for you – these can be difficult to find in many places! And very expensive in Canada and Europe!
- Hand sanitizer, packets of wipes (you can get wipes for fresh fruit at specialized travel stores), and tiny disposable toothbrush
- Napkin or paper towel
- Plastic utensils
- Plastic baggies for prepackaged nuts, fruit, cereal for snacks

If you are eating at a restaurant, they often will weigh your food for you. Ask the restaurant manager to help you. If you are traveling to an exotic location, talk to your nutritionist about whether raw fruits and vegetables are safe. You can also discuss taking Pepto (it can be taken as a prevention of travelers sickness); you also may want to take a pro-biotic to protect your stomach.

>>>Tip for happy traveling: put the kit into a clear plastic bag – this makes it easy to find your items in tight spots like airplane seats and it makes security people feel lots better! <<<

Through airport or maritime security

You CAN carry-on your abstinence kit on the plane, but a number of items cannot get through security without a doctor's order or unless packed into a checked suitcase. These items cannot go through security:

- any liquids over 3 oz (including yogurt)
- salads or more than one piece of fruit (sometimes other food – don't count on being able to take food through security!)
- water bottles/diet soda/V8
- bottles of salad dressing (can be packed in checked suitcase)

Large food scales can cause problems at security (they look suspicious on the x-ray scanner)– if you take a large scale, build in extra time because it will need special scanning. If you can, take a travel-size scale -- the Salter 1250 is a dream to carry, but remember to pack extra batteries!!!).

Mark your abstinence kit with a note “medical kit.”

>>>Tip for happy traveling: If you can get a note from a doctor or nutritionist about taking the kit on the plane, this will come in handy. The note could include the need to take liquids like cans of V8, lactose-free milk or sugar-free yogurt. Add extra time to the trip because security officials will need time to examine for your items.<<<

The **good news** is that the change in security practices means that there are many healthy choices on the other side of airport security. It is possible to get fresh salads, fruit, and packaged vegetables at most large airports. However, you will not find sugar-free yogurt or lactose free items in the airport carry-outs. Most of the salad dressings are regular dressings, not low fat or sugar-free, and at times they are not marked with ingredients or calories. Most airports in USA have a fancy coffee shop that does SOY lattes.

On the Plane/Road

Do not count on getting the food you need on the plane or a road-side carry-out. Most airlines do not serve food that you can eat. The exception is flying long-distance. If a meal is provided, you can request sugar-free, gluten-free or dairy-free ahead of time (often on-line), but these meals are usually absolutely horrid! The meals you get on long-distance plane trips are very close to the measures we need (the protein is often 3 oz, usually one carb and a roll is provided). However you will **not** get the veggies you need, so carry on a packet of veggies, and/or ask for tomato juice (not Bloody Mary mix – it has sugar!) if you are offered a drink. You can ask for two drinks at one time- ask for a tomato juice and water if you want that.

Carry on your own snack purchased on the other side of security, or, in car travel, take your snack in a little cooler. The snack on the plane will have forbidden items, so unless you can discard the forbidden items right away, do not accept the plane snack. Have your own! It is a hassle to carry it on, but you will be very glad you did!

On the Ground in a Foreign Land

If you are going to a foreign country, it may help to get a travel food plan from your nutritionist that includes using local foods that can be exchanges. One wheat-free traveler went to Italy and substituted soup for carbs and polenta and risotto for pasta. Ask your nutritionist about possible substitutes like fruit for starch or dairy for protein.

It can be difficult to find plain vinegar at the airport and in many restaurants overseas. For plane travel, pack vinegar or your low-cal dressing into small plastic containers of less than 3 ounces each in order to carry on. (One option for salad dressing is to get Walden Farms fat free/sugar free dressing in packets that easily go through security. These are available online.) If you check your suitcase, you can pack a large bottle of salad dressing wrapped in plastic, but lugging this around while traveling is bothersome...try to find alternatives.

Ordering in foreign restaurants can be tricky. If you can take Kwikpoint for travelers, this can be very handy when people do not speak English. Speak up if someone else is kindly ordering for you and tell them that you cannot have dishes with sugar. Insist on what you need or want at a restaurant

– most of the time (nearly 100 percent in our many years of experience) you will get what you need. When food arrives at the table ask for an extra plate, and put aside anything you cannot eat. Ask to have the extra plate taken away.

There are occasions when you simply cannot get what you need – one of us has been in the African bush and eaten at an eatery under a tent! Diets everywhere include protein, carbs, and veggies, and you will be able to put something together that you can eat.

When You are Stuck!

There are occasions when you simply cannot get what you need. If you are really stuck, simply turn to your HP and ask for help in knowing what is your proper portion, and then ask HP that these portions be enough. In our experience, asking HP to reveal to you a solution in a tight spot will never fail you...never. If you are in a place where you simply cannot weigh and measure, ask HP to help you get your proper portion and then surrender the outcome and do not let it niggle away at you.

In foreign countries, it can be difficult to know what products have sugar, wheat, or dairy. You can look up the various words for sugar and flour, but sometimes the product will not list the ingredients or you are in a restaurant. If in doubt, leave it out. Don't risk eating sugar. If you find out that you accidentally ate sugar, don't panic, but you may wish to drink extra bottled water.

Traveling to Europe? If you do not sleep on the plane, it can be a long day, so you may want to add a snack. Once you arrive, the first day will be a short day, so you may want to work with your sponsor or nutritionist to drop a snack. (You will pick it up on the way home.) Most flights to Europe leave the East Coast at night and arrive early in the morning, you may want to bring not only your dinner but your breakfast as well. On the way home to the US from Europe, you will have a long day, so you may want to work with your nutritionist to add a travel snack.

If you know the hotel where you are staying, mail yourself a package of non-perishable items: wheat free crackers and cereal, carrot sticks, fruit, nuts. This will cut down on what you have to pack in the suitcase and carry on, and it will be there when you arrive. If needed, request a mini-fridge in your room (especially if you will be out of town a while) and shop as soon as you arrive in town. Ask that the mini-bar be emptied of items you cannot eat – hotels are happy to do this for you.

Staying Connected

If you cannot reach your sponsor by phone every day, particularly due to time differences, you can also email in your food and writing. Agree with your sponsor in advance how you will communicate while you are away. Write down your food each day whether you commit it in or not, and even if it is just generic amounts and exchanges—this action will give you peace of mind. If you commit generic, keep a running tab on what you are eating. You can email this to your sponsor at the end of the day.

If you are traveling with a safe person and you can't reach a sponsor, turn your food over to that person.

Be sure to bring some program literature with you. Read and write on program literature everyday to keep the program close. (If you have space in your luggage, prior to departure, have OA friends write you notes in a little notebook. These can serve as mini-hookups when you can't make a real one.)

Try to purchase a phone card to call the US in advance of your travel so that you may call your sponsor and other members. You can also use it to call into phone meetings. One good source for

low phone rates is www.nobel.com. It will provide you with a local number to call into where you are going and a pin code.

Look on-line to see if there are any meetings at your travel location or on your cruise. If there is a contact person listed, you may want to reach out to this person before you leave so that you have an buddy nearby. If there are no meetings, you may want to look for English AA or other 12-step meetings. If you cannot reach your sponsor by phone every day, particularly due to time differences, you can also email in your food and writing. Agree with your sponsor in advance how you will communicate while you are away.

Don't expect that your travel program will be perfect, but you can travel abstinely. Many members see the world through abstinent eyes! Practice your program no matter where you go, no matter what life throws at you. We are doing it with you, on the road, sea, or in the air!