

10 Tips for Traveling with an LVAD:

Traveling with your LVAD should not be difficult with some planning before you leave.

1. Create a checklist for planning and packing.

Traveling with your LVAD will be easier if you take some time to organize and prepare for anything that may happen while you are away from home. Create a checklist that contains things that you will need to have available as you travel.

2. Pack all of your equipment in a carry-on with wheels.

Equipment gets heavy when you have to carry it. When planning to travel, make sure you have a piece of luggage with wheels in which to pack your LVAD equipment. Keep your equipment with you at all times since delays and cancellations are frequently encountered when traveling.

3. Make sure all of your batteries are fully charged before you leave.

Batteries are the main source of power for your LVAD while you are traveling. Make sure that you start the trip off right with a set of fully charged batteries. It will make the stress of traveling a little easier if you don't have to worry about your pump running out of juice.

4. If you are traveling a long distance, make sure you plan for rest stops or time to be able to get up and walk around.

Traveling by car, aircraft, train, or bus requires a lot of sitting. Plan to stop at least every 2 hours to be able to walk around to increase circulation in your legs so that you don't get blood clots. If you are unable to walk around, actively flex and point your feet at your ankles, straighten and bend your knees, and squeeze and relax your glutes to increase blood flow to your legs until you are able to stand.

5. Stay hydrated!

When you travel you are exposed to less humid air so you lose fluid faster just by breathing. Many times you drink less so that it decreases bathroom breaks while traveling. Your LVAD depends on how hydrated you are so limiting fluids so you don't have to pee is a bad choice. Make sure you drink non caffeinated beverages while you travel. You may have to stop a few more times, but you will make your LVAD happy!

6. Plan your route and find the closest VAD centers along the way so you know where to go if you need help.

Stuff happens when you least expect it. So avoid being stranded without LVAD resources by visiting the MyLVAD.com LVAD Center Locator Map to identify LVAD centers that are located along your route of travel and at your destination. A little pre planning can save a lot of guessing and maybe even your life if an emergency arrives.

7. Keep a file with documentation from your VAD team as well as manufacturer information about your LVAD in case you are asked for it while you are traveling.

No matter how you travel, there will always be questions about your LVAD. Especially when traveling by air, you may need to prove that the equipment that has been implanted within your body is safe for air travel. Contact your LVAD implant team for any paperwork that they may have to give you regarding your device before you travel. You can also download travel documents specific to your device at MyLVAD.com in the travel section

8. If traveling a long distance, notify your LVAD team when and where you plan to go, so that they can help you identify contacts along your route and at your destination.

Once you have located the LVAD centers that will be closest to you while you are traveling, contact your LVAD team to help you make contact with the LVAD coordinators at those centers before you travel. Have them prepare and share a summary of your course particularly if you have certain issues with your LVAD that would help another center treat you if you run into problems while on the road. It never hurts to share your information with local coordinators, and it will make it easier for them to help you if necessary.

9. Pack an extra week's worth of dressing supplies and medications.

You never know when the weather will interrupt your travel plans and leave you stuck somewhere away from home. Always have the supplies for at least two dressing changes in your carry-on equipment bag as well as enough medication to last you for a week if necessary. Layovers and cancelled flights can lead to extended stays in airports without the luxury of having your checked luggage. If you have the important stuff in your carry on, although the layover will be an inconvenience, it will not endanger your life.

10. Print the emergency documents related to caring for your device from our EMS section and place them with your carry on equipment bag as well as in your pocket.

MyLVAD.com has partnered with the Mechanical Circulatory Support Organization to provide Emergency Medical Services with guides for emergency care of LVAD patients. These guides can be accessed on MyLVAD.com. Download and print the guide that is specific to your LVAD and take it with you wherever you go. If you have an emergency while traveling, the documents can be given to the emergency medical service provider who cares for you and will give them the basic information they need for your care while transporting you to the nearest LVAD center (which you can also provide them because you identified them before you left)!