

1. At age 83, while not disabled, I have difficulty walking, especially coping with the hectic rush and crush of swarming humanity in airports, train and bus stations. I recommend that all disabled and aging passengers get notes from their doctors on official stationery, giving details of the patients' conditions.

Show the doctor's note at the check-in desk, and then such ordeals as going through security and boarding will be less hectic. Make an extra copy of the note, and carry one on your person and one in your suitcase. Throughout your journey, know what rights and accommodations you have. Check listings with faa.gov or other agency concerned with rights of the disabled.

2. Call ahead to the airline or other transportation company at least a day in advance of your trip. Get the latest information about facilities and services available for you in your travels, as well as discounts or added costs to the basic ticket price. For instance, if you'll need a wheelchair, are traveling with a helper dog and have other special needs, set it all up in advance.

3. Allow plenty of time to get to the station or airport when you're booked for flights and other forms of transportation. For air travel, two hours is recommended, and for other kinds of transportation, an hour should be sufficient. If a family member or other companion is traveling with you, make sure that person will be permitted to accompany you throughout the journey.

4. Before you leave home, make sure you've packed all of your medical and daily assistance needs. If you travel with oxygen, be certain it is functioning correctly and you take back-up equipment along. For all prescription medicine, the bottles and tubes should be clearly marked, so that airport security can process them quickly.

If you plan to be away from home for a week, take a two-week supply of vital health materials. Additionally, know where to get replacement items and medical help quickly, if an emergency situation becomes necessary at your destination city. Keep several copies of a packing list in case you must use it to locate lost luggage. Unfortunately, when you are required to check vital medical supplies with your luggage, according to the latest statistics, the chance it will be lost or delayed is about 25 percent. Murphy's Law is always lurking out there. Hope for the best, but expect the worst.

5. When booking hotels at your destination or overnights along the way, check at least a week in advance to determine which ones are wheelchair and/or elderly friendly. Whenever I go to a large resort, such as those in Las Vegas, where distances from entrance to casino to lobby to sleeping rooms can require very long walks, I always request a room close to the elevators.

If your preferences are for small, intimate hotels and bed and breakfasts, the ones you choose should be totally friendly to your limitations. If your disability requires it, make sure doors, bath facilities and other potential obstacles won't interfere with your getting around.