

# BACK PAIN

## PREPAREDNESS ABROAD: BACK PAIN



Back pain need not get in the way of living or travelling abroad, and being aware of potential complications beforehand can prevent flare-ups, decrease the possibility of emergency or stressful situations, and make it easier to access the right treatment should any difficulties arise.

### You always have options

Even when you are abroad, you always have options when it comes to medical care:

- **By phone or email.** Your Cigna team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- **In person.** Your Cigna team can also help arrange visits to doctors or specialists in your assignment country.

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### Before you leave

Talk to your doctor or Cigna Case Manager as soon as your travel plans are confirmed. The sooner you are aware of any potential risks or complications you can take the necessary precautions and be prepared in case they occur.

### Key questions to ask before going abroad

- How can I treat chronic pain or flare-ups on my own, with basic home care?
- What relevant specialists or therapists are available to me in my assignment country?
- What are the warning signs that my condition is changing or worsening?
- What care or therapy for my condition is covered by my Cigna insurance policy?

Visit [CignaEnvoy.com](https://www.cignaenvoy.com)

Search Cigna's global directory or call the Global Service Center (the number is on your Cigna ID card). Once you choose a health care professional, make an appointment as soon as possible.

## Understanding your medication

- Is my back pain medication covered under my Cigna insurance policy?
- Is my medication readily available in my assignment country? Do I need to provide a prescription or specific paperwork to obtain it?
- Do you know the generic and local brand names of your medication? You can use [CignaEnvoy.com](https://www.cignaenvoy.com) to check!
- Do you have enough supply of medication in case you cannot readily obtain it abroad or in case of an interruption in supply or an emergency?
- Are there any travel restrictions on your medication? (Consider the amount you can take with you or how it is stored)



## Consider the language

- Will the doctors, therapists or hospital staff speak my language?
- Should I have any of the following translated before I go?
- Doctor's note describing condition, test results, description of medication prescribed, diagram or illustration of medical condition, indicating areas of pain or discomfort.



## Travelling with medication

Medications should be in their original pharmacy-labelled containers. Always keep them in your carry-on, accompanied by a doctor's note explaining your condition and translated into the language of the destination country

## Pack accordingly

Depending on the country, it might be more difficult to find certain supplies or equipment, such as ice packs, physio tape or lumbar cushions. Plan to take these things with you.

If you need any larger items, such as a special pillow, exercise mat, or even a certain type of mattress, make arrangements for advanced delivery of these items in your assignment country.

## While you are abroad

Healthcare systems vary from country to country, and receiving the right treatment for back pain could involve different types of medical specialists than those you may be accustomed to consulting at home. Procedures for appointments and testing may also be different, the language might be new, and the titles or positions of doctors and specialists might not be the same.

It's worth remembering that, no matter the country, healthcare professionals are dedicated to providing care and assistance. And Cigna has made a rigorous selection of local practitioners, physicians and specialists offering high quality care for you and your family.

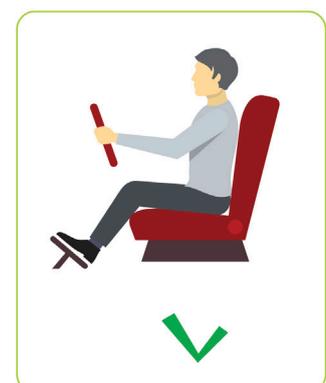
### General health and wellbeing

Working and living abroad is an exciting and rewarding challenge. Yet being in a foreign culture, perhaps with a new language, unfamiliar cuisine and different ways of doing things is not easy. Keeping healthy, active and relaxed is essential for your overall health. What is more, back pain can be highly susceptible to changes in stress, tension, and energy levels.

### Tip for preventing back pain while driving

For approximately 30-60% of drivers, driving causes back pain or aggravates existing back pain.<sup>1</sup> If you will be driving while abroad, consider the following<sup>1,2</sup>:

- Take a few moments to stretch before you set out.
- Adjust your seat so that you are sitting comfortably:
  - › Keep your buttocks and shoulders as close to the backrest as possible.
  - › Your legs and arms should be slightly bent as you sit with your hands on the steering wheel and your feet on the pedals.
  - › When turning the steering wheel, your shoulders should remain in touch with the backrest.
  - › Ensure two or three fingers' distance between the back of your knees and the edge of the seat, and keep your knees at the same level as your hips, or higher.
  - › The upper edge of the headrest should align with the top of your head
  - › If there is no lumbar support built into your seat, consider using a lumbar cushion
- Plan for regular stretching and rest stops. Don't wait for pain to begin before taking a break.
- For longer journeys consider sharing the driving with another person, if possible.
- When getting in and out of the car, try not to twist your back but turn with your whole body.



## Use Cigna 24/7

A world of support from the Cigna team is just a call or e-mail away. The service is available to you anytime, anywhere.

Whether you are dealing with a medical emergency or simply need a referral, we will help you get the health care and information you need, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Five questions to ask yourself when travelling with back pain

- Question:** Would a lumbar cushion, backpack, or other support make my journey easier?  
**Answer:** Talk to your doctor about the best option. Make sure you know the right way to position it - improper use could make the pain worse.
- Question:** Am I taking a long journey?  
**Answer:** Allow yourself frequent opportunities to stand up and walk around. Reserving an aisle or bulkhead seat on a plane will make this a much easier process.
- Question:** Do I have a lot of luggage?  
**Answer:** Consider arranging assistance with lifting or carrying bags on either end of your journey. Planning ahead might help you avoid unexpected strain or excessive weight.
- Question:** Do I really need to carry my own bags?  
**Answer:** Consider packing light and sending as much as you can with a mover or relocation specialist. This can also make your journey less stressful. Remember, less stress means less tension in your back.
- Question:** Am I wearing something comfortable on my journey?  
**Answer:** Swap loose-fitting clothes for tighter garments to ensure optimum comfort and relaxation.

## Questions about your diagnosis?

### Unsure which treatment is right for you?

Did you know you have access to a free, independent and confidential decision support service?

Discuss your concerns and have your case reviewed by a specialist in your condition.

The decision is yours. And we're with you all the way.



1. Driving and back pain. Back Care website.

<http://www.backcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Driving-and-Back-Pain-Factsheet.pdf>. Accessed October 24, 2017.

2. How to Cope When You Have Low Back Pain. Cleveland Clinic website. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/how-to-cope-when-you-have-low-back-pain>. Accessed October 24, 2017.

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