

Traveling with an LVAD

TSA Cares and Airport Security



What is TSA Cares?

Transportation Security Administration offers a program called TSA Cares that provides assistance to travelers with medical devices, including LVADs.

Before you travel (U.S. departures):

- Contact TSA Cares 72 hours before your flight
- Request assistance for security screening
- You can ask for a Passenger Support Specialist at the airport

At the airport:

- Tell the officer you have an LVAD before screening begins
- You should not go through standard body scanners
- Request a manual pat-down and visual inspection
- Keep all LVAD equipment in your carry-on

Helpful items to carry:

- TSA notification card (optional)
- Letter from your LVAD team (optional)
- Extra time built into your schedule

International travel:

- Security procedures vary by country
- Use simple language: "I have a life-support heart device"
- Expect manual screening in most locations
- Stay calm and advocate for yourself if needed

LVADStrong reminder:

Security teams may not recognize an LVAD right away. Your explanation helps guide the process.

Travel Health Insurance (International Travel)

Traveling outside the United States sometimes requires separate travel medical insurance. Coverage from programs like Medicaid generally does not apply internationally.

What to look for in a plan:

- Emergency medical coverage
- Emergency transportation or evacuation
- Coverage for pre-existing conditions (if available)
- 24/7 assistance services

Important considerations for LVAD patients:

- Most plans only cover sudden and unexpected events
- Routine LVAD care is not covered
- Pre-existing condition coverage often requires:
 - Purchasing the plan shortly after booking your trip
 - Being medically stable at the time of purchase
- Not all plans treat LVAD-related issues the same

Before purchasing:

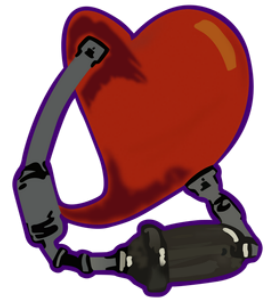
- Contact the insurance company directly
- Ask how they handle LVAD-related emergencies
- Request confirmation in writing if possible

LVADStrong reminder:

Travel insurance reduces financial risk, but it does not replace planning with your LVAD team.

Traveling with an LVAD

Practical, experience-driven travel tips



1. Pack like delays will happen

- Always assume:
 - Flight delay
 - Missed connection
 - Overnight disruption
- Bring:
 - Extra batteries beyond what you think you need
 - Extra meds (at least a few days buffer)
 - Extra dressing supplies

The mindset: "What if I get stuck somewhere for 24–48 hours?"

2. Never separate from your equipment

- All LVAD gear stays:
 - In your carry-on
 - Within reach at all times

Never:

- Check equipment
- Put it in overhead far from you
- Let someone other than patient or caregiver manage it

3. Give yourself more time than you think you need

- Security takes longer
- Explaining the device takes time
- You may need secondary screening

Build in buffer so you're not rushed or stressed

4. Have a simple explanation ready for security

"This is a mechanical heart pump. I cannot go through scanners."

Keep it:

- Short
- Confident
- Consistent

5. Transportation surprises happen

- Ubers cancel
- Flights reroute
- Traffic delays

Always think:

- "Do I have enough power for an unexpected delay?"

6. The people around you matter

- Travel with someone when possible
- Make sure they know:
 - Basic device awareness
 - Who to call

Even a little awareness goes a long way

7. Your body will tell you first

- Travel is physically and mentally taxing
- Fatigue hits differently

Pay attention early, not late

Traveling with an LVAD is not about eliminating risk. It is about preparation, awareness, and confidence. The more prepared you are, the more freedom you gain.

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Questions to Ask Your Care Team Before Traveling with an LVAD

This list is designed to help you prepare for a conversation with your care team. Always follow their guidance.

TRAVEL READINESS

- Am I medically stable to travel right now?
- Are there any concerns based on my recent condition or labs?
- Do I need a travel clearance note?

MEDICATIONS

- Should any of my medications be adjusted before travel?
- What should I do if I miss a dose while traveling?
- Are there any medication timing considerations across time zones?
- Do I need extra prescriptions for this trip?

DEVICE AND EQUIPMENT

- Is my current equipment setup appropriate for travel?
- How many batteries should I bring for this trip?
- Are there any device-specific risks I should be aware of?
- What should I do if I experience a device alarm while traveling?

EMERGENCY PLANNING

- What symptoms should prompt me to seek immediate care?
- When should I call you versus going to the emergency room?
- What is the best way to reach the LVAD team while I am away?
- Is there a backup contact if you are unavailable?

DESTINATION-SPECIFIC PLANNING

- Are there any concerns with my destination?
- Can you recommend an LVAD-capable center near where I will be staying?
- Are there any travel restrictions I should be aware of?

TRAVEL LOGISTICS

- Are there any limitations with flying or long-distance travel?
- Do I need documentation for airport security?
- Are there any precautions for hotel stays or extended time away from home?

FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING

- Do I need to check in with the team during my trip?
- What should I monitor more closely while traveling?
- Should I schedule a visit before or after my trip?

FINAL QUESTION

- Is there anything specific to my situation that I should consider before traveling?

