

TRAVELLING WITH HEART FAILURE

If your condition is unstable, or your blood pressure is very high, travel of any kind is best avoided. Heart disease like any other condition can cause you problems on holiday, so choosing your destination wisely and planning your itinerary with care should help to minimize any potential risks.

Holidays are an important time to allow yourself to rest and relax. If you have recently been unwell, had surgery or have just been discharged from hospital, you should wait until you have made a full recovery and your Doctor has confirmed that you are fit before you travel. Whether your condition is stable or unstable you should always consult your GP well in advance of departure and ensure you obtain confirmation from your GP that you are fit to travel and where relevant, fit to fly.

- ✓ Prepare your trip well in advance and choose a destination where you are confident in medical facilities and access to medical treatment.
- ✓ Check your accommodation and the local facilities are suitable. For example, avoid staying at a hotel situated at the top of a steep hill, miles away from the nearest town.
- ✓ It is generally not advisable to use spa facilities e.g. baths, saunas, Jacuzzis or steam rooms, if you have high blood pressure, a heart condition, angina or have had a heart attack.
- ✓ Do not use facilities that involve a sudden change of temperature e.g. a sauna followed by plunging into cold water. If you are planning to use such facilities please ask your doctor first.
- ✓ Do not overexert yourself. When travelling, use lightweight luggage, preferably on wheels and make use of porters and skycaps.
- ✓ Plan your journeys carefully allowing plenty of time. Don't rush!
- ✓ Take out adequate travel insurance to cover your condition.
- ✓ Take sufficient medication for your entire trip and a little more.
- ✓ Take a list of your medications and their dosages.
- ✓ Avoid hectic itineraries and don't exert yourself.

AIR TRAVEL

Do not fly if you have recently had a heart attack, stroke, illness or hospitalisation. Make sure your Doctor deems you fit to travel before you fly.

Always check with your airline on current restrictions regarding the carriage of medicines and GTN sprays in hand luggage.

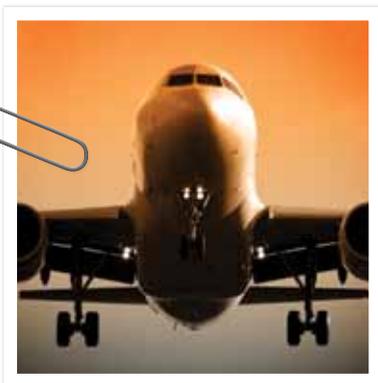
Air pressure and oxygen levels on board airplanes are reduced, but those with well controlled, symptom free, stable heart conditions should have no problems with air travel. The probability of developing a heart problem during a flight is relatively low.

The majority of passengers that fly end up sitting in one position for long periods of time. This can cause the blood to thicken increasing the risk of deep vein thrombosis. People with high blood pressure are considered to be more at risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) when flying. To minimise the risk of DVT, wear flight socks to improve circulation and try to walk up and down the aisles of the plane every half hour or so. Be sure to stretch and move your legs and feet whilst seated. Your in-flight magazines and literature are likely to contain information on seated exercises and ways to reduce the risk of DVTs.

MEDICALLY FIT TO FLY

All airlines have their own guidelines for defining being medically fit to fly. To avoid problems you must always check with the airline before booking. If you cannot find what you are looking for on your airline's website, give them a call and they will be able to check with a medical adviser on your behalf.

Generally speaking, you are medically fit to fly with cardiac and respiratory conditions if you can climb 12 steps and walk 50 metres on a flat surface without having an attack of angina or experiencing severe breathlessness.



You are generally unfit to fly if you are in one of the following categories:

- ✓ Clearly having trouble breathing when at rest
- ✓ Unsatisfactory control of heart failure
- ✓ Uncontrolled arrhythmia
- ✓ Unpredictable angina
- ✓ Haemoglobin levels below 7.5g/dl
- ✓ Currently have a transmittable infectious disease
- ✓ Experience psychotic illness

You may fly with a psychotic illness if you are travelling with an escort and proven to be stable.

You will have issues to address before flying if you fall into any of the following categories:

- **Epileptics:** If you do not have good control over your epilepsy you may need to increase your medication for the flight and the periods either side of it.
- **Pregnancy:** You must not travel after 36 weeks. After 28 weeks you will need to provide a letter containing your expected delivery date.
- **Undergone surgery:** You cannot fly for at least 10 days after chest or abdominal surgery even if it was keyhole surgery. (The same 10 day period applies after a GI (gastrointestinal) bleed, uncomplicated myocardial infarction (heart attack) and cerebrovascular accident (stroke) even with good recovery.)
- **Newborns:** Babies should preferably be two weeks old before they fly, but **MUST** be at least 48 hours.
- **Casts:** If your flight is under 2 hours long you should wait at least 24 hours after having the cast applied before you fly. If the flight is over 2 hours then wait 48 hours after the cast has been applied to fly.

DVTs are a possible cause for concern, especially on long haul flights.

DVTs

There is a common misconception that you are only at risk of a DVT when flying. The fact is that any long periods of immobility can put you at risk. Any long distance travel (of roughly 4 hours or more) whether by car, train or airplane will increase the risk of blood clots forming in the veins of your legs.

The Medical definition of DVT is

“A blood clot (thrombus) in a deep vein in the thigh or leg. The clot can break off as an embolus and make its way to the lung, where it can cause respiratory distress and respiratory failure.

Deep vein thrombosis is sometimes called the ‘economy class syndrome’. Even in young, healthy travellers, long stretches of time spent immobilized in the cramped seat of an aircraft with very low humidity sets the stage for formation of a blood clot in the leg.” **Source: www.medterms.com**

If you have an applicable condition then your airline or travel agent should supply you with a **MEDIF form** which both you and your GP should fill out.



DVTs should not be confused with phlebitis which is when blood clots form in varicose veins in the legs. DVTs are a much more serious form of clot forming in the legs' deep veins. You would be forgiven for thinking that they are not deadly as the clots that form in the legs, but when the clots travel to the lungs it causes a Pulmonary Embolus (PE); this is deadly. Severe PE can cause heart failure and collapsed lungs. When DVTs and PE occur at the same time it is referred to as VTE (Venous Thromboembolism).

AM I AT RISK?

The risk of developing a DVT whilst travelling is generally greater in those who would be at risk anyway.

You may be at greater risk of both DVTs and PE if you:

- ✓ Have a family history of clotting
- ✓ Have had clots previously
- ✓ Are pregnant
- ✓ Have had recent surgery
- ✓ Have circulation problems
- ✓ Have paralysis of the lower limbs
- ✓ Are being treated for heart failure
- ✓ Are over 40
- ✓ Are taking the contraceptive pill
- ✓ Are very tall
- ✓ Are on HRT or undergoing Hormone Replacement Therapy
- ✓ Have a blood disease
- ✓ Have recently given birth
- ✓ Are obese
- ✓ Have cancer
- ✓ Are undergoing or have had cancer treatment
- ✓ Have had a stroke

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Look out for:

- ✓ Swelling, pain, tenderness and redness (particularly below the knee on the back of your leg).

This will be significantly different from the general ankle swelling experienced by a lot of people.

- ✓ Symptoms only occurring on one leg (this is not always the case).
- ✓ Increased pain when moving your foot upwards.
- ✓ Symptoms occurring up to 4 weeks after travelling

PE symptoms include:

- ✓ Breathlessness
- ✓ Chest pain
- ✓ Collapse
- ✓ Loss of consciousness

If you experience any of these symptoms seek immediate medical advice.

REDUCING THE RISK PRIOR TO LEAVING

- ✓ The first step in reducing your risk is consulting a GP or health professional for advice. This is especially important if you fall into any of the at risk categories mentioned previously.
- ✓ Travel agents or airlines should be able to supply you with literature explaining DVTs and steps you can take to avoid them.
- ✓ Buy some compression socks. You can find these in most pharmacies and at the airport.
- ✓ If you are pregnant or have recently given birth consult your antenatal advisor for tips specifically for you.

REDUCING THE RISK ONBOARD

Here are some things you can do to reduce the risk of developing DVTs:

- ✓ Wear in-flight circulation socks.
- ✓ Keep the space in front of your feet free to enable you to exercise your legs and feet.
- ✓ Stay mobile.

If you cannot get up and walk around then follow advice in your in-flight safety manual and do some lower limb exercises.

- ✓ If you are totally immobile take a TENS machine or another electrical stimulation machine to help your circulation.
- ✓ Bend and straighten your legs, feet and ankles as often as possible during your journey.
- ✓ Drink plenty of water and avoid dehydration and excess coffee or alcohol.
- ✓ Avoid sleeping pills.
- ✓ If you are totally immobile ask your companion to massage your legs to increase circulation.
- ✓ Recline as far as possible.
- ✓ Forcefully press the balls of your feet against the floor. This will improve your circulation.
- ✓ Do breathing exercises to improve your circulation.
- ✓ Wear loose fitting clothing.
- ✓ Take an aspirin or some vitamin E.

Both aspirin and vitamin E are blood thinners. Always seek medical advice as aspirin may not be suitable for everyone, and those taking blood thinners already will need to be extremely careful.

A health professional will be able to give you advice on what a safe dosage of vitamin E would be.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

If you suspect that you have developed or are developing a DVT, seek immediate medical advice or head to the nearest Emergency Unit. Generally speaking DVTs and PE are treated with blood thinners and anticoagulants. These include drugs like warfarin and heparin.

JET LAG

WHAT IS IT?

The World is divided into 24 time zones, and jet lag is what happens to you when you cross them.

Our natural body rhythm responds to our regular exposure to hours of daylight and darkness, so when you cross a time zone and the hours of daylight become unfamiliar, we become out of sync. All our natural patterns are tied in to our body clock, so eating, sleeping, body temperature, digestion, toiletry functions, blood pressure and even hormone regulation takes time to readjust. Your body is jet lagged.

When we travel long distances, the chances are we will be exposed to stressful, crowded conditions and lack suitable time periods to eat and sleep. All these things take their own toll on the body and can unfortunately add to the effects of jet lag. The effects can also be increased with the number of time zones being crossed and the age of the traveller.

Do not worry too much as jet lag will not cause any serious lasting effects and within a few days you should be back to a normal rhythm. Jet lag is worse when you travel from west to east as the body finds it easier to adjust entering into a shorter day rather than a longer one.

WILL I BE JET LAGGED?

If you are travelling a long distance the probability is that you will experience jet lag to some degree. Sadly, frequent flyers or those who consider themselves very fit will not be immune to the effects. Jet lag will probably not affect young children and babies as badly as adults and those over 50, but there are things you can do to prepare yourself and minimise the effects.

TOP TIPS FOR BEATING JET LAG

1. TOP UP ON SLEEP

Make sure you get your rest in the days leading up to your flight. If you are travelling overnight, try and sleep on the plane. It all helps towards keeping you awake and getting accustomed to local time once you arrive.

2. STOP OVER

If you are not too worried about getting to your destination as fast as possible, include a stopover in your journey. Try to make your stopover long enough to get some sleep or have a shower.

3. PRE-EMPT THE TIME CHANGE

If you are flying East try getting up and going to bed a little earlier for the few days before you travel. If you are going west, try getting up and going to bed a little later.

4. FLY ON DESTINATION TIME

When you board the plane, change your watch to the local time at your destination. During the flight eat, drink and sleep at times similar to those of your final destination if possible.

5. PLAN YOUR MEDICATION

If you take medication at regular intervals, get advice from your GP about what to do when crossing time zones. This is especially important for Insulin users.

6. KEEP HEALTHY

Be sure to stay hydrated and active. Ideally, drink something at hourly intervals. Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol. If possible walk around the cabin, employ the seated exercises suggested to you by the airline and stretch.

7. TAKE ACTION

When travelling east try to catch a flight arriving early in the morning. When you get to your accommodation try to get some sleep straight away in order to go through the day as normally as possible. Be careful not to sleep for too long though as you will make your adjustment harder.

8. LIGHTEN UP

Exposure to daylight is helpful in tricking the brain to beat jet lag. If you arrive at your destination during the day, try to spend some time outside in the daylight.

9. TAKE IT EASY

Give yourself a break! Crossing each time zone will take a day to recover from, so take it easy when you arrive. Try and avoid strenuous activity or operating machinery until at least the next day.

10. USE CAUTION

There are supplements that some passengers and airline staff use to help them beat the affects of jet lag, but you must always be very careful of taking anything. Take advice from your GP or health professional before buying or ingesting anything.

MEDICATION

You should carry enough to cover you at the very least from “check in” to baggage collection. If any of your medication is in liquid form be sure to have confirmed with the airline that you can carry it with you. Remember no more than 100ml of any liquid can be taken onto a flight. If possible take a tablet alternative to liquid medication in order to avoid any carry on issues or refrigeration problems. If your medication requires refrigeration be sure to contact your accommodation to make necessary arrangements.

It is always a good idea to contact your airline in advance to advise them of any medical supplies you will be bringing, as there are some airline restrictions that may apply. If you need to store medical supplies in a suitcase, it is advisable to label the case as containing medical supplies in order to avoid its disappearance. It may be necessary for you to carry supporting documentation from your doctor or other healthcare professionals. For the most up to date information contact your departure airport and airline or visit their website.

Always check with your airline on current restrictions regarding the carriage of medicines.

If you do need to take equipment on board it is a good idea to fill out an ABTA form and send it to your airline and airport in advance.

Always ensure you have sufficient medication to last your entire trip and perhaps a little more. It is wise to carry a list of your medications including both the generic and brand names of each along with their respective dosages. Keep the list separate from the medications. If necessary keep instructions on how to administer your medication to you should you be rendered incapable.

It is wise to check with the embassy of the country you are planning to visit in case your medication includes an illegal ingredient.

- ✓ **DO** Make sure you have enough medication to cover your holiday plus a little extra
- ✓ **DO** Make sure you have enough medical supplies to cover your holiday plus a little extra
- ✓ **DO** Carry at least a day's worth (plus travelling time) of medication and medical supplies with you
- ✓ **DO** Check with your airline for restrictions
- ✓ **DO** Check your destination embassy for possible illegal ingredients
- ✓ **DO** Advise your airline in advance of any medical equipment you are taking
- ✓ **DO** Take supporting documentation with your medication
- ✓ **DO** Write out your medication names, dosages and instructions on administering them
- ✓ **DO** Write out your personal GP or healthcare professional's information
- ✓ **DO** Take out Travel Insurance that covers your condition
- ✗ **DON'T** Take any liquids over 100ml on board a flight
- ✗ **DON'T** Forget to make arrangements for refrigeration
- ✗ **DON'T** Leave any medication in direct sunlight
- ✗ **DON'T** Take any unnecessary medication DURING a flight

OFFICIAL AIRLINE REGULATIONS FOR MEDICATION

Generally speaking here are medication guidelines for Air Travel. These guidelines were set by the US and adopted by the UK, Europe and Canada.

THE 3-1-1 RULE

The carriage of liquids onto a plane in hand luggage is still restricted Worldwide due to liquid explosives still being a threat. Therefore the 3-1-1 rule applies to liquids in hand luggage.

- 3.4 ounce (100ml) quantities of liquids, gels and aerosols must be placed in one quart sized, zip top, clear plastic bag
- One bag per passenger. The bag **MUST** be screened



PERMITTED MEDICATIONS

The following medications are permitted:

- ✓ All prescription and over-the-counter medications (liquids, gels and aerosols). This includes eye drops, saline solution (for medical purposes) and petroleum jelly.
- ✓ Liquids (including water and fruit juice), liquid nutrition or gels for passengers with a disability or medical condition.
- ✓ Life-support and life-sustaining liquids (e.g. blood, blood products, bone marrow and transplant organs).
- ✓ Medical or cosmetic augmentations (including mastectomy products, bras containing liquid and prosthetic breasts).
- ✓ Frozen items (must be frozen solid when screened) needed to cool any medication or equipment. If partially melted, slush or have any liquid at the bottom, they must meet the above rules.

You may take liquid medications over 100ml if they are declared to a Transportation Security Officer. A declaration can be made in writing, verbally or by a companion. Any liquid medications that are declared should be kept separate from all other property when screened at security.

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VISUAL SCREENING OF MEDICATION

To have your medication and medical equipment visually screened instead of going through the scanners you must follow these guidelines:

- ✓ You must ask for the visual screening process BEFORE x-ray scanning begins.
- ✓ If you are planning to undergo visual screening make sure all your medication and supplies are separated in bags before you approach the body scanners for the Security Officers the other side.
- ✓ Request the visual inspection and immediately hand the bags to the Security personnel.
- ✓ You will be asked to remove, display and re-package your own medication and supplies to avoid any unintentional damage.
- ✓ If some of your medication or supplies fail to pass the visual inspection they will go through the x-ray screening process. If you refuse, you cannot take them through security with you.

DIABETES AND INSULIN

You should notify a Security Officer if you have Diabetes and are carrying Insulin with you. Any Insulin must be clearly labelled and identified. All medication must be screened. The following Diabetic medication is allowed:

- ✓ Insulin
- ✓ Dispensers that are already loaded with Insulin
- ✓ Vials and boxes of vials, jet injectors, epipens, biojectors, and infusers
- ✓ Preloaded syringes
- ✓ An unlimited number of unused syringes providing they are alongside injectable medication
- ✓ Lancets, blood sugar monitors, test strips, testing solutions and alcohol swabs
- ✓ Insulin pump and supplies (including cleaning solutions, batteries, tubing, needles, catheters and infusion kits) proving they are accompanied by Insulin
- ✓ Glucagon emergency kit
- ✓ Urinary test strips
- ✓ Unlimited used syringes as long as they are in a hard surfaced transportation container
- ✓ Hard surfaced disposal containers for syringes and testing strips

If you wear an Insulin pump you can ask for the pump to be visually inspected and have a full body pat down by an officer rather than go through the metal detector screening. Be sure to tell the Security Officer that the pump cannot be removed because it is attached via a needle inserted under your skin.



OXYGEN

Anyone travelling with or needing oxygen must:

- Check with your Doctor prior to travel if it is safe to disconnect you from your supply.
- Contact the airline in advance (and mention it again at check in) for supplemental Oxygen on board if required.
- If needed make sure that any local suppliers provide you with Oxygen at stop overs and your final destination.
- Make arrangements for any canisters left at the departure gate to be removed.
- Make the same arrangements for both the outgoing and incoming flights.

Medical oxygen and respiratory equipment or devices are allowed, but will be screened.

If you are connected to Oxygen:

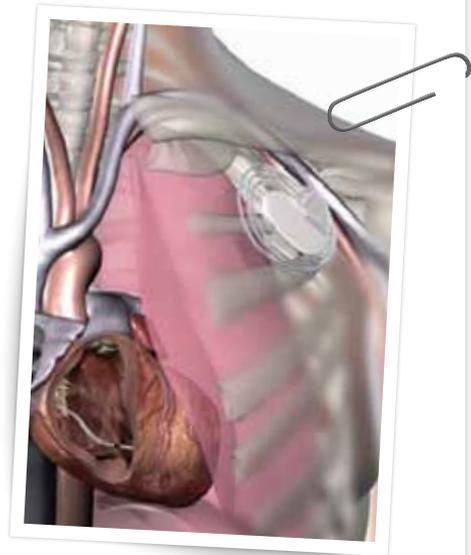
- Inform the Security personnel if you cannot be disconnected from your Oxygen device.
- If you cannot be safely disconnected, ask Security for the visual inspection process.
- If you can be disconnected, you will be responsible for that.
- Once disconnected, your equipment WILL be screened.

If someone else carries your oxygen supply:

- They will not get through security without a valid boarding pass or valid gate pass.
- They may accompany you to or meet you at the Gate providing they have a valid gate pass.

IMPLANTED MEDICAL DEVICES

- Advise Security staff that you have an implanted medical device, and they will help keep the process discreet for you.
- If you have a Pacemaker it is recommended that you carry a Pacemaker ID card. Show Security personnel your ID card and ask for a pat down rather than going through the metal detector.
- Advise Security Officers of where your implanted device is located.
- If you have been advised that the metal detector (or handheld metal detector) may affect your electrical implant, be sure to tell Security and they will pat you down instead.



CLIMATE

If you have had a heart attack it is not advisable to travel to countries that experience extreme temperatures.

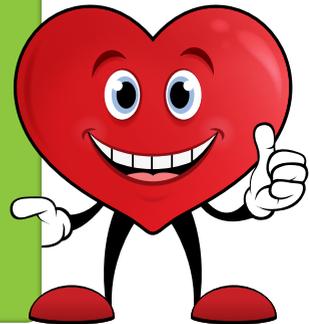
Extremely cold conditions cause dramatic changes to the body including an increase in heart rate, thickening of platelets and increase in blood pressure. In low temperatures our blood vessels constrict to conserve heat and maintain body temperature. This reduces the amount of room our blood has to move thereby increasing our blood pressure and heart rate, and thickening the blood. For those who have narrowed arteries, this may cause chest pains (angina) and increase the chances of blood clots forming in the arteries. Blood clots can lead to a heart attack or stroke. Those with high blood pressure are at higher risk of these complications.

If you do have to venture out be sure to wrap up warm with several layers of clothing. Layers will help to trap heat and keep your body temperature stable, reducing strain on the heart. Our extremities lose heat faster than the main part of our body and heat is lost the fastest through our head, so keep your hands and feet warm and wear a hat. Do not drink alcohol in the cold weather.

Exertion is obviously a potential threat for those with heart conditions and the cold weather can cause you to overlook possible sources of exertion. Make sure to identify potential threats such as shovelling snow or pushing a car. Simply walking in the snow can cause potentially dangerous levels of exertion.

Very hot weather conditions can cause dehydration and heat exhaustion. Excessive heat and humidity can upset the body's natural cooling process and can, therefore, put an extra burden on your heart and circulation process.

Excessive perspiration results in a loss of bodily fluid which in turn reduces our total blood volume. This means your heart has to pump even harder to get the smaller volume of blood to your working muscles, skin and the other body parts. If too much fluid is lost, our internal body temperature will rise and if left untreated this can be life threatening. It is therefore essential that in hot and humid weather, to reduce the strain on your heart, you drink plenty of water, avoid caffeine based and alcoholic beverages and wear light comfortable clothing.



ALTITUDE AND DEPTH

If you intend to travel to high altitudes, please check with your Doctor to make sure you will be able to cope. You may require an adjustment to your medication for the period of travel. Always discuss your travel plans with your Doctor or Health professional prior to departure. Blood Pressure tends to increase at higher altitudes as they force the heart to work harder. So please consult your doctor and make sure he is informed of your travel plans and deems them to be safe for your situation.



High altitudes are best avoided.

Altitude forces the heart to work harder. Where a healthy heart can respond to the demands, someone with a history of heart problems, failure or valve disease may struggle to cope. If you are in a location 2,000 metres (about 650 feet) or more above sea level, you should expect to find physical activity more difficult.

If you have recently recovered from a heart attack or heart surgery it would be preferable to choose a low lying destination.

If you are contemplating diving, it is essential that you have a thorough check up with your GP. When signing up for a diving course you will most likely be asked to complete a medical form confirming any pre-existing conditions. When answering "yes" you will be required to visit your GP and complete a PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) medical statement. This will confirm if you are fit to dive.

TRAVEL INSURANCE FOR HEART FAILURE PATIENTS

We realise the problems with getting travel insurance. Pumping Marvellous in association with AllClear Insurance offers a tailored insurance plan providing both exceptional value and just the right level of cover for your needs.



Buying a policy recommended by Pumping Marvellous automatically donates

10%

of your policy value to the charity.

For a quote that has been tailored for heart patients visit

www.travelinsuranceforhearts.org.uk

or call **0845 250 5250**

and quote "PPM"



ABOUT ALLCLEAR



Mike Rutherford, Chairman of AllClear, has a family with a fair list of medical conditions. Mike's son had testicular cancer at 22, his wife Elaine has Diabetes and has had her thyroid removed, his daughter was paralysed in a diving accident at 20 and Mike has a heart condition that has required surgery.

On paper, it sounds like a disaster, but the Rutherford family like any other live day to day almost unaware of the medical conditions that appear on their paperwork. Generally speaking none of their conditions affect how they live their lives and especially how they travel. Why should they!

After Mike's son, Michael, had his cancer removed surgically, he was perfectly healthy once more. The difference? It was going to cost over £4,000 to insure him for a trip to America. Mike was already working in insurance and it incensed him that a perfectly healthy young man should be penalised to such an extent for something that did not affect his daily life.

The motivation for the AllClear specialist medical travel insurance was clear and soon after the product was born.

AllClear is now the market leader in **specialist medical travel insurance** and the appointed provider for the British Insurance Brokers Association Medical Travel Scheme. They provide everyone with the opportunity for travel insurance cover, regardless of medical conditions, age or destination, supporting the fact that they believe everyone has the fundamental right to travel. They care passionately about helping people who are travelling with medical conditions, or who have trouble finding travel insurance elsewhere, by providing quality, competitively priced, tailored products and services.

They understand that choice and keeping your options open are important factors for everyone, whatever you are doing, even booking travel insurance. Knowing this, they created and launched the first ever travel insurance comparison website for those with pre-existing medical conditions in 2010 and called it AllClear Options.

**Call our award winning UK call centre on 0845 250 5250
or visit www.travelinsuranceforhearts.org.uk**