

## Useful links:

Civil Aviation Authority

<http://www.caa.co.uk/Passengers/Before-you-fly/Am-I-fit-to-fly-/>

Aerospace Medical Association

<https://www.asma.org/asma/media/asma/Travel-Publications/Medical%20Guidelines/Fitness-to-Fly-and-Medical-Clearances-Nov-2014.pdf>

World Health Organisation

<http://www.who.int/ith/ITH2010chapter2.pdf>

British Airways

<http://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/travel-assistance/medical-conditions-and-pregnancy>

If you have any queries or concerns, please telephone the **Fracture Clinic on 01270 612244**

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Reviewed by Readers' Panel.



Mid Cheshire Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Medical Clearance – Am I fit to fly?

### Information for patients



### Guidance on flying with a plaster cast or following orthopaedic surgery

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

**This leaflet provides information for patients flying following a traumatic injury or post-surgery. Patients will need to check with individual airlines about their specific guidelines.**

There are several differences in the environment of an aeroplane which can impact on your body. Specifically there is a lower atmospheric pressure within an aircraft cabin. This can affect the amount of oxygen that is carried in your blood stream, but for most patients this is not an issue. Due to this lower pressure the volume of a gas in a confined space can expand by up to 30%. This is particularly important if you have had recent abdominal surgery or keyhole surgery.

The air in an aeroplane is often more dry (is less humid) than in the normal environment, which can lead to feeling thirsty or dehydrated.

### **What is the risk of developing a clot?**

In a long haul flight there is an estimated chance of 1 in 4500 people developing a clot in a vein in the leg. It is thought that being immobile in a confined airplane seat along with being dehydrated can contribute to this risk. This may go unnoticed and often a clot will be dissolved by the body without causing any symptoms.

However, sometimes the clot can spread to other parts of your body, such as the lungs and cause more significant problems. Therefore we would advise that patients do not consider flying for at least six weeks following surgery, in order to minimise the risk of developing clots.

### **I have a cast on, what should I do?**

Following application of a plaster cast, most airlines restrict flying for 24 hours if the flight is less than two hours (short haul) and for 48 hours for longer flights. This helps to avoid harmful swelling occurring to the limb. However, these restrictions do not apply if the cast has been split (bi-valved).

If you are unsure contact your airline and speak to the Doctor/plaster technician about getting your cast split prior to flying.

Full length, above the knee plasters or patients who require leg elevation **may** need to purchase appropriate seating in order to obtain the necessary leg room.

If flying with this type of plaster discuss with the Doctor in clinic about whether you require any medication to thin your blood to help reduce the risk of developing clots.

### **I have got a boot on, can I fly?**

We use two main different types of boot dependent on the condition being treated. If your boot has a pump for air to be inserted or removed, then make sure this accompanies you in your hand luggage. As air expands in the aeroplane you may need to let air out to avoid discomfort.

### **Will my metal pin or plate trigger the airport security alarms?**

Airport detectors are sensitive to metals. This includes metal implants below the skin, which may have been used to treat your orthopaedic condition. We do not provide a card or letter indicating the presence of metal implants. This is because its authenticity cannot be verified by security officials and they will probably wish to undertake further screening to ensure your and other passengers' safety. Having loose clothing allows inspection of any surgical scar and may help speed your transit through security.

### **Do I need to wear compression stockings?**

As a department we do not routinely use compression stockings. If you wish to use these for flying then this is at your own discretion.

### **Further information**

Some airlines require a medical information form to be completed prior to flying. Often this is completed by you, the passenger, but before your flight check, with your airline if further medical information is required.