

BRING A MAP AND PACK LOTS OF SNACKS!

Tips for Traveling after Bariatric Surgery *by Kristal Hartman*

You've had bariatric surgery and are working hard to manage your weight and adjust to all of the changes that follow surgery. What comes next? It's the perfect time of year for a summer vacation, of course! I can't think of a better way to celebrate the commitment and dedication that it takes to be a bariatric surgery patient than with a fun trip. Whether by car, boat, train or plane, with a bit of planning you can explore the next town over or travel across the world!



The best thing about traveling in 2019 is the amount of information available on the internet. There are articles, blogs and apps designed to help you plan your travels. While they are helpful resources, we know that a bariatric surgery patient has unique needs. I have traveled extensively for my job both before and after my surgery, and I learned some key things along the way.

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Here are a few practical tips for traveling after bariatric surgery:

KEEP TO A ROUTINE

The most important thing I learned while traveling after my bariatric surgery is to keep the habits that I have made a part of my daily routine since surgery. Sticking to your routine will keep your body healthy and ready for exploration!

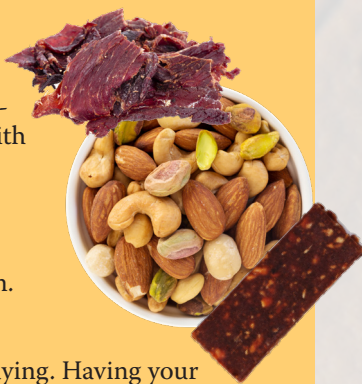
DAILY ROUTINE 

Stick to your routine by:

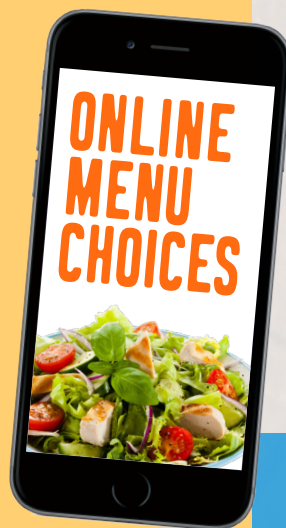
1. Eating meals at the same times you would at home.
2. Journaling your food so that it helps you stay on track.
3. Planning physical exercise into each day of your trip.

PLAN AHEAD FOR FOOD

Pack lots of high-protein, low-carb snacks and keep them with you at all times. Travel with a bullet blender or a shaker cup for protein shakes/drinks and ask for a refrigerator and microwave in your hotel room. You can grocery shop when you arrive, or have groceries delivered to where you are staying. Having your normal foods around makes meal and snack decisions easier and you will be less likely to opt for quick, unhealthy food.



When you are eating out, read through menus online. This even works for many amusement parks and cruises! It will allow you to plan ahead and choose carefully. Don't be afraid to ask for what you need when you order your meal. If meals are chosen for you as part of your travel arrangements, let them know ahead of time (*if you can*) that you have special dietary needs. Options for getting the right portion sizes are ordering a la carte, sharing plates with others or asking for to-go boxes in advance. My bariatric clinic gave me a wallet-sized card stating that I had bariatric surgery and would like to be allowed to order from the kids/senior menu. If it is a buffet, walk the entire buffet first. That way you can see all of the available options and choose according to what fits in your nutrition plan. Meeting dietary needs is very common for restaurants now, so don't let this hold you back!



MAKE TIME FOR EXERCISE



While exercise may not be on the top of your to-do list on vacation, it is easier to fit it in than you may think! Most hotels have gyms, so if going to the gym is part of your daily routine, you can easily stick to it. Local gyms and studios often offer day passes or single classes which can be a fun way to try

something new. If the gym isn't your thing, get out and explore your new surroundings with a walk, hike or bike ride. Many cities offer bike rentals with pick-up and drop-off locations spread around the city. You could even bike to dinner and back!

If you wear a fitness tracker, you'll be surprised at how many steps you get in as you walk around that amusement park for 12 hours a day! It can even count your laps in the hotel pool. While you may not be getting your normal form of exercise, fitting it into your vacation is easy if you make physical activity part of the fun activities already scheduled. Even if your dream vacation is to lay on a beach and read a book, take a daily sunrise or sunset walk along the shore!



CONCLUSION

I always think of my bariatric surgery as a new lease on life—a chance to do things I never thought I'd be able to do. Traveling after bariatric surgery is a blast! It just takes a bit of advanced preparation so you can stick to your post-bariatric routine. So, if you haven't already, what are you waiting for? Plan a trip, your adventure awaits! And if I may offer a destination suggestion... I'd love for you to join me in Tampa, FL, August 1-3 for the OAC's *Your Weight Matters* 2019 Convention & EXPO!

About the Author:

Kristal Hartman is a proud member of the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) and is honored to serve as a member on the National Board of Directors. She had the gastric sleeve surgery in August 2014 and it was the hardest and best decision she ever made for herself. She is passionate about her work in Biomarker and Genetic Research for Precision Medicine in Oncology, Obesity, and other Chronic Diseases.

MAKE SURE TO PACK YOUR MEDICATION



Make sure to fill your Rx's and vitamins before you leave. Time changes can be tricky. It's best to try to take your medications at the same time you usually do. You can set alarms on your phone to help keep you on schedule.

If you are traveling by plane, TSA does not require you to have your medication in prescription bottles. However, some states have different laws so check ahead to be sure. If you are traveling internationally, it is recommended that you keep your prescriptions in their original bottles to make clearing customs easier. Always pack your medications in your carry-on. You don't want them in checked luggage in case that bag gets lost. If you are traveling by car, you can use travel containers—some of them will carry up to two weeks of medications and vitamins.

KNOW HOW YOUR INSURANCE WORKS AT YOUR DESTINATION

Let your health insurance provider know you are traveling. They can help you check your coverage in a different state or country. Make sure to have your insurance cards and a form of payment if emergency medical expenses make you pay up front. Some credit card companies and travel companies (*cruises and tours*) offer travel insurance. Read all the details first, but the coverage might be a good option to add to your trip. Know where the nearest urgent care or hospital is at your destination (*and for stops along the way*). Have your bariatric office phone number saved in your phone in case you need to reach them. Planning ahead can save time and stress in case you get sick.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



JOIN TODAY: GO TO OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN

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