

View this article online at: [patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-deal-with-holiday-anxiety](https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-deal-with-holiday-anxiety)

## How to deal with holiday anxiety

Holidays are supposed to be a welcome break from the stress and strain of work and life. Away from emails, deadlines and more, it's a chance to relax – but for some, going away can trigger anxiety.

Whether it's trying to organise a family trip with kids, or the pressure to have an amazing time, going away can be stressful. According to a survey by [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), more than one in three people worry about things going wrong on the first day of their holiday.

And for anyone who already struggles with [anxiety](#), the concept of travelling can be even more challenging.

"It is extremely common to experience anxiety before going away on holiday," says Life Coach Directory member [Julia Rogers](#). One reason is the expectation that can be placed on having a 'perfect' trip or the 'best holiday' – either by yourself or other travellers.

"This is increased if you only have a limited time to take a holiday. There is the fear of wasting this valuable time," Rogers says. "[Social media](#) and the internet are a great way of keeping up with everyone else's lives and holidays. They can also make us feel inadequate or anxious if it seems that we aren't having an equally good time."

Another factor is the pressure of organising a trip, especially if there are young children or elderly people travelling. This might lead to excess worrying, Roger adds. If you're travelling with other people, you might question how will it work? Will friendships be tested? Whose needs will be put first and will everyone have the holiday that they want?

"Small children may struggle with the change to their routine and this may affect their behaviour, which places [stress](#) on the carers too," she explains. "Teenagers could be going through a time when they are navigating their relationships with their families and communication might be a challenge for all."

For some people, leaving work behind can lead to fear about what might happen in their absence. The cost of going on holiday or previous negative experiences, such as [food poisoning](#), can also trigger anxiety too.

"Fear of the unknown, going to a different place, potentially with a different culture, and not knowing what to expect, can lead to anxiety," says Rogers. "New experiences can be exciting for some people and scary for others."

"The holiday might involve some aspect of travel that is anxiety-inducing. Some people have a very real fear of flying which impacts their ability to enjoy the holiday."

## Travelling with anxiety

Managing the daily challenges of clinical anxiety can also make organising a holiday tougher. "Tasks – such as making phone calls, following up on bookings, and checking timings – can feel like more of an uphill struggle," Rogers adds. "[Clinical anxiety](#) can have a huge impact on confidence, which then has an effect on how you are able to complete organisational tasks and communicate with others."

"With today's technology and choice, holidays are more likely to be ones we put together ourselves, as opposed to a package trip, so it is understandable that this can lead to feelings of panic and overwhelm."

Elizabeth\*, 33, has [generalised anxiety disorder](#) which she manages with medication and mindfulness techniques. "In the last year I have done a three-week road trip in the States and a week in the Black Forest in Germany," she says. "While I get very excited about going away, often the build-up is tinged with a lot of anxiety – mainly around planning where and what to do, booking tickets, potentially 'missing out' on experiences, and worrying I won't make the most of the time I have away."

"I seemingly put a lot of pressure on myself to holiday 'hard', ie be active and squeeze lots in and do it the 'right' way, whatever that means," she adds. "In Germany this year, by the fourth day I suffered a series of panic attacks which basically ruined two days of a week's trip. I felt I had failed to organise and plan well, and felt it was my responsibility to make sure we had a good time. Ironically this stress ensured I didn't have a good time."

## How to cope with holiday anxiety

"Any major life event, including going on holiday or organising a family trip, can often be stressful or bring on anxiety even if you're not already prone to being an anxious person," says Nicky Lidbetter, CEO of [Anxiety UK](#).

But if you struggle with holiday-related anxiety, there are steps you can take to make travelling – whether near or far – less stressful.

### Plan in advance

Planning in advance can help limit any stressful surprises, which means booking all accommodation, travel, and transport such as taxis in advance. It's also a good idea to set a budget for everything, including spending money, and to try to stick to it – and take out travel insurance too.

If you're heading somewhere that might require [travel vaccinations](#) or [antimalarials](#), make sure you've sorted these well in advance – some vaccines need a course that has to be started a couple of months before travel to provide the best protection. Your local pharmacist should be able to advise you on both vaccinations and antimalarial tablets. And don't forget to factor the cost of travel vaccinations and malaria prevention tablets into your budgeting – many travel vaccines, and all malaria tablets, need to be bought privately as they aren't available on the NHS.

"Take simple steps like planning well in advance and creating a checklist of what you need to pack and plan for, such as tickets and passports, so you can be assured you have not overlooked something important," Lidbetter says.

If you're stressed about organising a trip, ask other travellers to help you plan too. "Think about what tasks you can delegate to other people so that you are not managing the trip all on your own. Get your fellow holidaymakers to share the responsibility," Rogers says.

"Look at what you have control over and what you don't, and focus on what you can control. You can't control what the weather will be like, but you can ensure that you have the clothes you need to be prepared for all eventualities."

### **Talk to others**

"The first step with managing anxiety is to recognise that it is present and it is having an impact on your life," says Rogers. "Talk to someone you trust and tell them that you are struggling with the holiday or a particular aspect of it. Often we feel that we have to manage on our own. This gives the appearance that we are coping when we might not be."

It can also be helpful to identify what parts of the holiday are causing the anxiety, Rogers explains. "If it is making phone calls around the booking, can you ask someone else to do this for you? If it is fears around what food will be available for you when you arrive, can you do some research so that you are prepared?"

### **Include normal activities**

Going on holiday doesn't have to mean a total break from routine. Fitting in things you enjoy doing day-to-day – such as going [running](#) – are still possible to do when you're away from home.

"Focus on the idea of enjoying the holiday as it is, not having a vision in your mind of 'the perfect holiday' as this is unattainable and you are setting yourself up to fail," says Rogers. "Acknowledge that the holiday will be a unique experience."

### **Don't overdo it**

For many of us, going on holiday means overdoing it with food and drink – but this can make anxiety worse. "As a general rule with anxiety, trying to [remain active](#), limiting your alcohol and caffeine intake, and ensuring you allow time for relaxation can all make a big difference," Lidbetter adds.

"Additionally, there are lots of really valuable self-help books, resources and groups available, which many of our members find particularly useful."

### **Try mindfulness**

Stress and anxiety around holidays are often linked to people projecting ahead - holidays are a change from our day-to-day routines and we aren't enjoying the break because we're too busy worrying about the unknown. [Mindfulness](#), being aware of your surroundings and focused on the here and now, can help you stay in the moment and improve your mental well-being.

"Many people find taking a few minutes out each day to practise mindfulness can be helpful, as this technique is about focusing on the here and now rather than the past or future," Lidbetter says. "Keeping balance in your life is really important so as not to allow the holiday planning and preparation to take over completely."

### Get support

If you struggle with anxiety or low mood frequently, speak with your GP about accessing professional help. They will be able to direct you towards the right treatment, whether it is talking therapies or medication. Speaking with family and friends can help too, or you could try reaching out to [Anxiety UK](#) on the national anxiety helpline on 03444 775 774.

**Disclaimer:** This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

<b>Last updated by:</b> Lydia Smith 08/07/2019	
<b>Peer reviewed by:</b> Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP 08/07/2019	

---

View this article online at: [patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-deal-with-holiday-anxiety](https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-deal-with-holiday-anxiety)

Discuss How to deal with holiday anxiety and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).

---



To find out more visit [www.patientaccess.com](http://www.patientaccess.com)  
or download the app



Follow us

