



Patient Power

Traveling While Living With Cancer

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Michele Nadeem-Baker:

Hi. This is Michele Nadeem-Baker, your patient reporter with Patient Power. Today I'm going to talk about the importance of why you need to still take vacations and travel. Just because you're a patient doesn't mean that you should stop all parts of your life, especially those that are the most enjoyable, and travel is something that's upon us in parts of the country and the world right now, in a lot of the world. It's summer months, and then there's going to be travel in other parts of the world, so there's always a good time to travel during the year. And I'm here to convince you to make sure you get out there and do it so you're safe, you're not getting sick, and so that you can enjoy yourself the most and have confidence for going away.

But before I get into this, I just want to give my disclaimer that I am not a doctor. I'm not an expert. I'm just a patient sharing what I have learned myself. So always ask your doctor if it's okay, your oncology team if it's okay to travel.

So with that in mind, I just want to tell you that today I did something that will help me travel more safely, meaning that I will not get sick. And I'm a little loopy right now, I'll confess, because they gave me diphenhydramine (Benadryl) before an IVIG infusion, and that is intravenous immunoglobulin, and I'm getting those monthly now, as a lot of other people are. I know Andrew Schorr does well, and it's to protect us and boost our immune system so that we're not so susceptible to catching things that are happening around us, and I was catching everything for years.

So this is helping arm me, and I had my first one last month, this is my second, and I am, have to say, knock on wood, whatever—I think this is wood, my desk—I am not catching things as I was, and I hope that continues, because that's going to help me be more confident to travel and not worry so much about people coughing up a lung next to me or sneezing. Right now, I kind of run and hide from them, and I probably still will, but at least I'm better armed.

So I just want to tell you yesterday I started my travels. I have family visiting here from California, I'm in Boston, and we went to Salem, Massachusetts, the home of witches. And we decided to go see a few of the different things that are famous in history, and one was the House of Seven Gables, and the other was the Salem Witch Museum. And I'm going to show you some pictures of when we were there, and you'll see, I was with two of my cousins who were out here to visit. They are nephews graduating from MIT, so we're all excited, having a big family barbecue tonight.

But we were enjoying ourselves on the water and seeing what everyone hears about through history. I know some people have this—they're kind of attracted to the whole idea of witches. You think of "Bewitched." There's actually a statue of Elizabeth Montgomery in "Bewitched" also in that area where we were, and there's a tale about the Salem witch trials, and it was a lot of fun.

And of course eating is part of being here in Massachusetts and having to have lobster. So we enjoyed ourselves in between sights, and we enjoyed having lobster. You'll see I'm in one of those funky lobster bibs that are really tacky with

my cousins, and we had a great time. This is a shout out to my cousins, the Galligers. Hi. Thanks for coming, and allowing me to be your local tour guide.

So how can we all be traveling, be it by cruise ship, airplane, train, car, you know, the movie "Trains, Planes & Automobiles." And one of the ways is to ensure that if you are, let's just say, bitten by something when you're away that you try to prevent it first with some kind of natural spray, repellent, or I saw today in the grocery store there are also wipes now. There are little pen-size sprays that you can also buy.

This is one that I use not only on myself but on my dog, because it's so safe, and it's for ticks and other mosquitos. It's allegedly stronger than DEET. It does not contain DEET, but there are so many others that are out there. So you should definitely be prepared.

I also planted lavender in my garden that's supposed to help keep away bugs. It's a natural repellent, and there are other flowers that can also be done that are a natural repellents. So I suggest you do all of those things, and it will help you keep safe from bug bites, because I don't know about you, but I have a huge reaction to bug bites thanks to my leukemia.

So you should also ask your doctor for something if you happen to have these reactions. My little mosquito bite, I mean, will blow up, and I seem to attract every mosquito in the next town and mine. So one of the things that helps once you get those bites, there is a prescription. It's clobetasol propionate, and I don't know if you can see this. I'll hold it up for a little while for you. And if you are bitten this takes it down, and it gets rid of it within a few days. So that helps a lot as well. So those are two of your best friends if you're going to somewhere that's buggy or hiking in the woods it's buggy or somewhere else.

Another thing you want to do is to still make sure you wipe down everything with sanitizer and bring your hand sanitizer with you. If you're flying I suggest it does seem like there are a lot of people on the plane with you that are sneezing or coughing, make sure you just travel with a surgical mask in your bag, in your carry-on, so that you can put it on should you need to do that as well.

And you also want to stay rested and well hydrated, you know. Make sure you still continue to be hydrated. That's so good for so many things including to stay well while you're traveling.

And I just want to invite you to write in to Patient Power and to me where you plan ongoing in the next few months. I want to issue a challenge. I would love to hear from you, and you tell me where you would love to go and what—but then when you've actually booked it. I'm hoping to go somewhere overseas.

I'm not sure if we'll be able to or not in the summer, perhaps it will be in the fall, but we are going to Nantucket for a couple of weeks and bringing our dog, my lovely Gabby, our chocolate Lab, and it will be a lot of fun. And we have not done that for a couple of years. We used to do it all the time, so I'm trying to resume that to normal in life and to ensure that we are enjoying things. In addition to that we'll probably be going down to the Rhode Island shore. We're lucky that we can drive to these places. And then in the fall, like I said, perhaps going to Europe.

So I invite you to write in. Please tell me, please. Say, yes, I'm going away. You've now told me. I can do this, and you're going to do it, and we need to enjoy life. We all do.

So if you have questions about what I've found that helps in staying well when you're on the road and not getting sick while you're traveling, other ways to prep before traveling, please write in and let me know. You can comment right on this video.

And the other thing is make sure you bring all your prescriptions with you and that you're armed and prepared. For Patient Power, I am Michele Nadeem-Baker, your patient reporter. Thank you for watching.

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