

Request for 'Fit to fly' letters

GPs now have very little involvement in pregnancy care as most is midwife led but we are still asked for 'fit to fly' letters.

Flying and pregnant

The commercial aircraft environment is not considered hazardous to the normal pregnancy as maternal haemoglobin remains 90% saturated and the foetal PaO₂ changes very little.

Gestation

The safest time to fly is before 37 weeks for a single pregnancy and before 32 weeks when carrying uncomplicated twins.

Most airlines require a certificate after 28 weeks.

Straight forward pregnancy or any risk factors?

Risk of preterm labour.

History of severe anaemia, sickle cell disease, recent significant vaginal bleeding, serious cardiac or respiratory disease and recent bone fractures.

General advice

Motion sickness may exacerbate pregnancy sickness.

Increase risk of leg oedema, nasal congestion and ear problems during the flight.

Long haul flights increase the risk of developing a DVT and pregnancy increases this risk further.

When a flight is four hours or longer it is advisable to wear graduated compression stockings, increase fluids and avoid alcohol and caffeine.

Speak to the patient and look at their notes.

Can their midwife complete the fit to fly letter for this airline?

References

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/news/rcog-release-air-travel-and-pregnancy--all-you-need-to-know/>

<https://www.caa.co.uk/Passengers/Before-you-fly/Am-I-fit-to-fly/Guidance-for-health-professionals/Pregnancy/>

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/patients/patient-information-leaflets/pregnancy/air-travel-pregnancy.pdf>

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/sip1/>

<https://www.medicalprotection.org/uk/articles/fit-to-fly>

Suggested letter

Headed paper

To whom it may concern

XX is X weeks gestation of a single/multiple pregnancy. (*<36/40 or <32/40 respectively*)

She has had a straight forward pregnancy to date with an expected date of delivery of XX/XX/XX and is due to fly on XX/XX/XX returning on XX/XX/XX.

To date, I know of no reason why this patient shouldn't be fit to fly.

Sign

Date

Stamp