



Center for Health & Hygiene in the Home & Community

The Center for Health and Hygiene in the Home and Community serves as a national and international resource for information and education, applied research, professional training and conferences. The Center focuses on issues relating to hygiene and infection control in areas such as:

- consumer food safety
- home hygiene
- daycare
- preschool
- homecare
- sports and leisure activity
- travel and hospitality

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Tips for Staying Healthy
While Traveling Abroad



June 2007

Play it Safe While Traveling

The ready availability of inexpensive flights has enabled people to travel and explore many areas of the globe; however, this luxury is not without its risks. The risk of becoming sick while traveling abroad often depends on two important factors:

- Making adequate pre-departure preparations
- Taking safety precautions while traveling

Make adequate pre-departure preparations

Secure any necessary visas and travel documents in plenty of time for your trip—doing so will not only ensure smooth travels, but will also help reduce any travel anxiety and stress! Take time to learn about potential health risks in each of the places where you'll be traveling.

Consult your doctor before traveling if you are pregnant, have a serious health condition, or are traveling to a location with harsh conditions. Refill any prescriptions that you will need while away.

Check with your medical insurance to find out what you'll need to do if you need to seek medical care in another country or outside of your primary care provider network. Find out if your insurance has referrals in the country you will be visiting. Make a list of available foreign clinics in the area you will be located.

Take a look inside for travel safety tips. . .

Resources

Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT)

Road Travel Reports
<http://www.asirt.org>

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Traveler's Health Information

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx>

Lonely Planet Health Information

www.lonelyplanet.com/health

Travel Health Online

www.tripprep.com

Excerpts from consular information sheets and CDC recommendations, general information on travel health issues.

United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1180.html

The U.S. State Department Overseas Citizen's Emergency Center

number is (202) 647 5225, which is handy for information on medical, financial, or legal problems while abroad.

The Vegetarian Traveler

www.vrg.org/travel

World Health Organization's (WHO) International Travel Health Guide

<http://www.who.int/ith/en/>



Take Safety Precautions While Traveling

Most travel-related diseases can be prevented and when diagnosed, easily treated. According to WHO's International Travel Health Guide the major causes of illness while traveling are:

- Diarrhea
- Malaria
- Hepatitis

Traveler's diarrhea: This is the most common malady affecting travelers. There's a 35%-60% chance that you will get a bout of travelers' diarrhea during a month-long trip to a developing country. Paying careful attention to safe food and drink guidelines will reduce your risk. Prompt treatment with antibiotics stops most cases of diarrhea.

Malaria, which can be fatal, is the most important parasitic disease to avoid overseas. It is a serious health problem in many tropical and subtropical

countries—
favorite
vacation
spots.

Avoid drinking tap water in developing countries, instead purchase bottled water or boil water before using if necessary. When buying water make sure the seal is not broken and if you're in a restaurant ask them to open the bottle at your table so you can see that the seal is not broken. Some places reuse opened bottles and fill with them water from questionable sources.



Assess your potential exposure to decide whether or not to carry malaria treatment tablets with you.

Hepatitis is the most common viral illness you need to avoid. While not usually fatal, hepatitis A can foil the best planned vacation and lead to weeks or months lost from work. Hepatitis A vaccine is highly effective in preventing contraction of the virus. Make sure to get your vaccination before your trip. If you are exposed to hepatitis A during your trip you can get another vaccine and it is important to use good hygiene, sanitation, and food safety practices.

Pack a First Aid Kit

You can never be too cautious, particularly when traveling somewhere with limited medical facilities. Make room in your bags for a simple first aid kit. Some items to include in your kit are:

- Thermometer
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Adhesive bandages
- Aspirin
- Non-adhesive dressings
- Antiseptic powder or solution
- Prescription antibiotic for enteric infections, as advised by your travel clinic
- OTC Antibiotic cream
- Wound closure/butterfly strips
- Bar of soap

- Alcohol gel skin sanitizer
- Pack of tissues & small pack of paper towels (for drying hands)

Food and Water Safety

When traveling it's important to practice food and water safety "smarts". To do so follow these guidelines for foods that should be safe to eat and avoid those that are high risk foods.

Safe to Eat:

- Eat at restaurants that are known to cater to foreigners (such as larger hotels or restaurants) or that are specifically known by other foreigners to be safe. Lonely Planet and other travel guides are great references.
- Survey the scene—if the restaurant looks dirty in the dining area or the restroom, you can assume poor sanitation in the kitchen as well.
- Eat foods that are well-cooked and served steaming hot.
- Eat breads, tortillas, crackers, biscuits, and other baked goods.
- Eat fruits, nuts, and vegetables with thick skins, peels, or shells that you remove yourself. Do not use tap water to wash your food, instead use bottled or boiled water.
- Eat canned foods.
- Always wash your hands with soap and dry them on a paper towel before eating and after using the toilet. Use an alcohol-gel hand sanitizer if you cannot get to a washbasin.

- Drink carbonated bottled water or soda if unsure about quality of drinking water.

Avoid These High Risk Foods:

- Any food from street vendors or market stalls.
- Leafy or uncooked vegetables and salads.
- Undercooked, raw, or cold meat, seafood, or fish.
- Unpasteurized dairy products such as cheese, yogurt, ice cream, or milk.
- Cold sauces such as mayonnaise, salad dressing, chutneys, or salsas, which are usually raw and may be made by hand.
- Buffet foods unless you know they are fresh and have been kept steaming hot. Avoid buffets where there are no food covers or fly controls.
- Ice in drinks if unsure about the quality of drinking water & use bottled water for brushing teeth.



Be cautious about
consuming food from
outdoor vendors