



Essential Tips

Wherever you go, you will enjoy the experience more if you stay healthy. Whether you are traveling for pleasure, employment, education, business or just visiting friends or relatives the first step to healthy travel is good preparation.

The trip is booked and you are raring to go.

BEFORE TRAVEL

1. Make sure you have adequate insurance. Accidents and health problems do occur and health care, particularly in North America is very expensive. Evacuation from a remote area may also be difficult and expensive. Insurance means SUPPORT and many people have been caught out by the attitude "it cannot happen to me". If you have money to travel you have money for insurance. Discuss this with your travel agent.
2. Seek medical advice at least 6 weeks prior to travel. This is very important where a course of immunizations is required to build up long term immunity.
3. Have a routine dental check and if you have a problem discuss what you need to carry in the event of a problem.
4. Make sure your routine immunizations are current and cover yourself for the recommended vaccinations specific to your trip.
5. If you are traveling to a country with endemic malaria understand the disease and what medications are useful for protection. Make sure the medication is also suitable for you. You may need to start the medication before entering the destination. You will certainly need to continue for a time after leaving.
6. If you have a pre-existing health problem eg diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma etc make sure you discuss the trip with your doctor. Ask him/her for a letter covering the status of your problem and any medications you are taking. Make sure the name of the medication is generic rather than the pharmaceutical name. As an example, Panadol is the pharmaceutical name for paracetamol.
7. Pack an appropriate medical kit. If you are traveling to a destination where traveller's diarrhea is common make sure you have medications to shorten the course of the illness. Travelling on a bus or other commuter transport is not very pleasant if you are feeling "loose".
8. Consider what accessories might be appropriate for your type of trip. A surfing holiday may put you at risk for coral cuts or swimmer's ear. Trekking through forested areas might expose you to ticks. Don't forget your repellants and sunscreen. You might need to consider a mosquito net.
9. Check out the conditions at your destination and make sure you have appropriate clothing. High humidity areas can increase your risk of fungal infections. Pack a hat.
10. Take copies of your passport, travel immunizations and travel insurance. Carry a copy separate to the original documents and leave another copy with a relative or friend.

WHILE TRAVELLING

1. Make sure you understand healthy travel on planes. If you any pre-existing issues for Travellers Thrombosis (DVT) and traveling long distances discuss it with your doctor. You may be best advised to wear travel stockings or even have an injection prior to travel. Eat lightly, drink plenty of fluids other than alcohol or caffeine and make sure you follow the advice in the airline magazine. Most airline websites cover these issues quite well.



2. Remember that Traveller's diarrhea is the commonest health problem seen in travelers. Eat sensibly and avoid high risk foods. Use bottled water where possible.
3. If taking medications for malaria make sure you continue to take them as directed by the doctor. Remember that the medications are not 100% protective and the best way to reduce your risk is not to get bitten. Malaria is only one of many diseases transmitted by mosquitoes and other insects. Wearing appropriate clothing and using repellants are important for many reasons.
4. Avoid swimming in fresh water in areas where schistosomiasis is found. If exposed, vigorously towel yourself dry. Consider having a test for the disease 3 months after exposure. Always make sure you alert your medical service provider of possible exposure if being seen for a urinary tract problem.
5. Choose your mode of transport carefully. Avoid overcrowded buses, trains or boats. Motor vehicle accidents are common in many overseas locations and your risk may be 70 times what it is at home. Avoid driving at night in unfamiliar areas. DO NOT RIDE MOTOR BIKES.
6. Make sure you take personal security seriously. Leave expensive looking items at home. Avoid poorly lit areas off the main tourist area at night. Where possible travel in groups. In night clubs and bars be wary of spiked drinks.
7. Observe the local customs regarding clothing.
8. Always practice safe sex. It has been found that people are more than 200 times more likely to contract HIV while traveling than through activities at home. Much of the concern involves alcohol and other risk taking behaviour seen in people away from their usual societal restraints.
9. Avoid exposure to animals. Do not approach or pet stray animals, particularly dogs and cats. Any bites must be taken seriously. In many instances travellers who have died from rabies could have been saved if they had sort medical attention as soon as possible.
10. If traveling at high altitude make sure you ascend slowly. Understand the symptoms of altitude sickness and obey the rules. Descent may be the only option

ON RETURN

1. If you are taking medication to prevent malaria make sure you complete the course. This may involve taking tablets for up to 4 weeks after returning. The medication is often aimed at the parasite after it leaves the liver. This may not happen for a couple of weeks after exposure. Make sure you understand what has to be done prior to departure.
2. Practise good personal hygiene if you have a continuing diarrhoeal illness. Make sure you wash your hands after going to the toilet and avoid food preparation for others until you are better. Seek medical attention if there is blood or it is prolonged (more than 7 days). Treatment early may avoid post diarrhoeal irritable bowel syndrome.
3. Complete booster doses of any vaccinations which have been advised. This will result in long term protection. Make sure your records are updated and held in a safe place.
4. Have a check up with your doctor if you have any health concerns. Consider medication for parasites if you have been traveling in tropical areas of poor sanitation.