



## Health Advice for Travellers

### Before You Travel

When planning your trip, it is important to think of ways to stay healthy while travelling.

- Visit a travel clinic at least six to eight weeks prior to travel to ensure enough time to get the necessary immunizations.
- Purchase medical insurance.
- Make or buy a first aid kit for common health concerns, including pain and fever medication, cold remedies, tweezers, scissors, bandages, mosquito repellent, and medication to help prevent and treat diarrhea.
- Have a dental check-up.
- Consider taking an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses, plus a written prescription from your eye doctor.
- If you have an ongoing health concern, discuss your travel plans with your doctor. Ask your doctor for a letter stating your medical history and prescribed medications. Carry a medical aid kit with medications, and other supplies you will need for your trip.

### While You Travel to Your Destination

- Travel can be tiring - get plenty of sleep before you leave for your destination.
- If you suffer from motion sickness and plan to travel by plane, sit in a seat above the wing and move your head as little as possible. You may want to take an anti-nausea medication for the symptoms.
- Wear loose clothing, and comfortable shoes.
- Drink plenty of water and/or juice and avoid alcohol and caffeine-containing drinks to avoid dehydration.

- Eat light meals.
- Walk around and stretch your legs to help improve circulation.
- When you arrive at your destination, try to eat and sleep according to local time.

### Food and Water Safety in Developing Countries

- Eat foods that are well cooked. Never eat leftovers or food that has been sitting for a long time or not stored properly. Do not eat food sold by street vendors.
- Drink bottled water, bottled drinks, or beverages made with boiled water. Always avoid ice and tap water.
- Use bottled or boiled water for brushing teeth.
- Make sure dairy products such as milk, cheese or yogurt, are pasteurized and refrigerated. If in doubt, avoid them.
- Do not eat custards, mousses, mayonnaise, or hollandaise sauce.
- Do not eat raw vegetables, salads, or fruits that cannot be peeled, such as grapes or strawberries. Wash and peel your own fruits and vegetables. Do not eat the produce if the skin is broken or bruised.
- Do not eat undercooked or raw meat, fish or shellfish.
- Do not eat watermelon as it may have been injected with local water to increase weight.

### Sun Protection

- To avoid skin and eye damage caused by the sun, wear clothing that covers your skin and eyes such as a hat with a wide

brim, and sunglasses with ultra violet or UV protection.

- Apply a sunscreen with a SPF 15 (sun protection factor) about 15 to 30 minutes before going out into the sun. Apply the sunscreen according to the instructions on the label.
- Avoid or limit your time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. The sun's rays are stronger at high altitudes and when reflected from snow, water, and sand.

### Safe Sex

- Always use a condom for sexual intercourse. Although condoms cannot prevent every case of HIV, hepatitis B, or other sexually transmitted infections, they can reduce the risk of getting these diseases.
- Women who only use diaphragms should *insist* that their male partners use condoms as well. Avoid engaging in sexual activities that permit sexual fluids to enter your body.

### Injury Prevention

- Wear closed-toe shoes to prevent cuts, wounds, insect or snake bites, or infection from parasites.
- Be very careful when driving in a foreign country and on unfamiliar roads. Use your seat belts. Do not drink alcohol and drive. Be sure to use common sense and caution.

### Swimming

- Wade or swim only in pools filled with clean, disinfected water.
- Do not swim in tropical waters, streams, canals or lakes, which may be infested with parasites that cause disease.
- Do not swim in the ocean if it is close to sewage outlets or freshwater streams.

### Animal Bites

- Rabies is more common in tropical countries. It is spread by bites from rabies-infected domestic and wild animals.
- Do not pet or feed dogs, cats, or other domestic animals. Avoid contact with all wild animals, including monkeys.
- If bitten, cleanse the wound with soap and clean water immediately. Consult local health authorities regarding the possible need for rabies treatment. Contact local health authorities when you return home to complete rabies treatment.

### Prevent Insect-borne Diseases

- Insect bites, particularly in the tropics, can spread diseases such as dengue fever, malaria, yellow fever, and Japanese encephalitis.
- Carry and use a mosquito repellent. See HealthLink BC File [#41f Malaria](#) for more information on mosquito repellents and other tips to prevent mosquito bites.

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm) or your local public health unit.

Click on [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

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