

Health advice for travellers

Before you travel

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

- Visit a travel clinic at least 4 weeks before your trip to get the immunizations you need
- Buy medical insurance
- Make or buy a first aid kit for common health concerns. Include pain and fever medication, cold remedies, tweezers, scissors, bandages and mosquito repellent. Bring medication to help prevent and treat diarrhea
- Have a dental check-up
- Take an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses and a written prescription from your eye doctor
- If you have an ongoing health concern, talk to your health care provider about your trip. Ask your doctor for a letter stating your medical history and prescribed medications. Carry a medical aid kit with medications, and other supplies you 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. Try to 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 drinks with caffeine 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 and served hot. Avoid foods that are served at room temperature. Do not eat food sold by street vendors
- Drink bottled water, bottled drinks or beverages made with boiled water. Do not drink tap water. Ice made from purified or disinfected water may be used.
- 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

Sun protection

- Protect your skin and eyes from 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 30 (sun protection factor) 30 minutes before going out into the sun. Apply the sunscreen according to the instructions on the label. Use a lip balm with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Apply repellent 15 to 30 minutes after sunscreen. Products that combine sunscreen and repellent are not recommended. Sunscreen can be re-applied after repellent
- Avoid or limit your time in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The sun's rays are stronger at high altitudes and when reflected from snow, water and sand
- For more information on sun safety please see [HealthLinkBC File #26 Sun safety for children](#)

Safe sex

- Always use a condom for sexual intercourse. Condoms cannot prevent every case of sexually transmitted infections, but they can reduce the risk
- Women who only use diaphragms should male partners to 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 contain parasites that cause disease
- Do not swim in the ocean if it is near sewage outlets or freshwater streams

Animal bites

- Except in Antarctica, rabies occurs worldwide with a higher risk in Central and South America and the Caribbean. It is spread by licks, bites or scratches 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 or scratched, cleanse the wound with soap and clean water right away. Ask local health authorities if you need rabies treatment. Contact your local health authority when you return home to complete rabies treatment
- For more information on rabies see [HealthLinkBC File #07a Rabies](#)

Prevent insect-borne diseases

- Insect bites can spread diseases such as dengue fever, malaria, yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis. Take extra caution in tropical areas
- Carry and use a mosquito repellent
- For more information on mosquito repellents and tips to prevent mosquito bites see [HealthLinkBC File #41f Malaria prevention](#)