



Health Advice for Travellers

If you are planning on travelling outside of Canada, it is important to remember that other countries may have different health issues and concerns. To stay safe and healthy while travelling, follow the advice below.

Before You Travel

- Visit a travel clinic at least 6 to 8 weeks before you plan to travel to get the necessary immunizations. To find a travel clinic near you, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada website www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/travel-health/yellow-fever/vaccination-centres-canada-british-columbia.html.
- Purchase travel health insurance.
- Make or buy a first aid kit for common health concerns. Your first aid kit should include pain and fever medication, cold remedies, tweezers, scissors, bandages, mosquito repellent, and medication to help prevent and treat diarrhea.
- Have a dental check-up.
- Take 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 health care provider. Ask your health care provider 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.
- Travel can be tiring. Get plenty of sleep before you leave for your destination.

While you Travel to 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

- Always wash your hands before eating or preparing food. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Eat foods that are well cooked and served hot. Avoid food served at room temperature.
- 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.
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy products and fruit juices.
- 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.
- 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.

Sun Protection

- Wear loose-fitting, light-coloured 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) or more 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 4 p.m. The sun's rays are stronger at high altitudes and when reflected from snow, water, and sand.
- Drink plenty of cool liquids, especially water, before you feel thirsty to decrease your risk of dehydration.

For more information about sun safety and heat-related illnesses, see [HealthLinkBC File #26 Sun Safety for Children](#) and [HealthLinkBC File #35 Heat-related Illness](#).

Safe Sex

- Always use a male or female condom for every sexual activity. Although condoms cannot prevent every case of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), they can reduce the risk of getting these infections.
- Be aware that other birth control methods do not protect against HIV or other sexually transmitted infections.
- 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.

For more information about STIs, see [HealthLinkBC File #08o Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections](#).

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. Consider safer options other than driving.

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.
- Try to avoid getting water into your mouth or nose when swimming or participating in activities in freshwater, pools, or hot tubs. The water may not be adequately treated.
- Do not swim in the ocean if it is close to sewage outlets or freshwater streams.

For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #39 Safety Tips for Swimmers](#).

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 your local health authority when you return home to complete rabies treatment.

For more information on rabies see [HealthLinkBC File #07 Rabies](#).

Prevent Insect-borne Diseases

- Insect bites, particularly in the tropics, can spread diseases such as chikungunya, dengue fever, malaria, yellow fever, and Japanese encephalitis.
- Carry and use insect repellent.
- Apply repellent 15 to 30 minutes after sunscreen. Products that combine sunscreen and repellent are not recommended. Sunscreen can be re-applied after repellent.
- Cover up. Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved, loose fitting, tucked in shirts, long pants, shoes or boots, and a hat.
- In tick infested areas, tape the cuffs of your pants or tuck them inside your socks, shoes or boots.
- Sleep under a bed net, preferably treated with insecticide.

For more information on insect repellents and tips to prevent mosquito bites, see [HealthLinkBC File #96 Insect Repellents and DEET](#) and [HealthLinkBC File #41f Malaria Prevention](#).

For More Information

For a list of travel vaccines that you should consider when travelling, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada website www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/travel-health/where-you-travelling.html.

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on 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.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.