

General Health and Safety Tips

- Make an appointment to see your doctor at least three months ahead of departure for a physical and required or recommended immunizations. If you have a health condition that requires routine attention, prepare to deal with the condition overseas. Bring a doctor's statement with you describing your medical problem, prescriptions for drugs you might require, other treatment information regarding your problem, and a very clear explanation about any drugs or medical paraphernalia that you are carrying with you.
- Find out from your public health service if gamma globulin shots, a preventative measure against hepatitis, are recommended for the country or region where you plan to travel. Request copies of medical records that would be important to the treatment of problems you might encounter overseas: X-rays, EKGs, a record of your blood type, prescriptions written in a generic form, dental records, and a letter describing any special health problems. Make a duplicate copy of this information and keep (whatever is practical) in two places, one on your person and one in your luggage.
- Remember that U.S. prescriptions cannot be honored overseas. Take additional prescribed drugs with you and be sure that you have a doctor's letter describing, in generic trade and dosage terms, what these drugs are and how they are used. Sometimes prescription drugs in the U.S. can be bought over the counter in other countries. Beware, however, of buying potent drugs over the counter. Always ask careful questions about what you're purchasing.
- Bring eyeglass prescriptions and extra glasses or contact lenses. Consider bringing some extra cleaning solution with you, as it can be many times more expensive abroad.
- Bring a medical kit. Standard items that might be useful include adhesive tape, cotton swabs, gauze, Band-Aids, sterile cleaners, and antibacterial ointment. Depending upon the country, it might be useful to have water purification tablets, salt tablets, skin lotion and moisturizer, insect repellent, antihistamines, painkillers, disinfectant, small scissors, tweezers, thermometer and something for insect bite reactions.
- Learn how to find a doctor overseas. If you are with a health insurance program, a Member Services department might be able to help. The school or center you're attending (administrators, teachers) and family or hotel you're staying at will have favored physicians. Large international hotels refer English-speaking doctors, or you can check with the U.S. consulate or embassy. IAMAT, the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers, provides a list of English speaking doctors all over the world. There is no fee, but donations to this nonprofit organization are welcomed.
- Keep all medications in your hand luggage. Checked baggage can be subject to extreme temperature variations and might be lost.

Eating Safe Foods

When abroad, consider food safe to eat if it is served steaming hot and is thoroughly cooked (not cooked, cooled and moderately reheated). Other things considered safe include items you can peel (oranges, avocados, etc.); processed beverages you pop open (bottled water, carbonated soda, beer, etc.); piping hot coffee and tea. Exercise your judgment on other foods: those sitting at room temperature, and/or uncovered, foods requiring refrigeration, foods sitting out in the open sun (such as items in an open air market).

Health Care Hints for Home and Away

- Avoid "Entero-Vioform" and "chloramphenicol." Entero-Vioform is a constipating agent that has been removed from the North American market several years ago because it has been proven to have potentially dangerous neurological side effects.
- If you need injections, request that a disposable syringe be used.
- Avoid blood transfusions unless critically necessary. Plasma or glucose are less likely to be contaminated.
- Wear shoes or sandals at all times! Many protozoa, fungi and worms enter the body through the skin. These parasitic organisms are common in most areas of the world. Don't go barefoot!

Colds and sore throats are common. When should you be concerned?

1. When you have accompanying fever lasting more than 24 hours.
2. When you have swollen glands around your jaws, ears, and/or neck.
3. When you have severe sore throat lasting more than a few days.
4. When you have accompanying earache, loss or diminution of hearing, or discharge from ear(s).
5. When you have accompanying painful and very tender sinus(es), and/or redness over sinus(es).
6. When you have accompanying moderate to severe muscular and joint pains.
7. When you have an accompanying red rash that is worse in body creases (e.g., at the elbow or back of the knees).
8. When you have accompanying cough with increased and abnormal colored sputum.

Source: http://www.adventuresabroad.com/index/before_you_go/health_abroad.html