

Traveler's Health Fact Sheet

1. **Why are special precautions necessary during travel?** - If you are planning to travel internationally you should be aware that conditions in other countries, both natural and man-made, may be significantly different from those in the United States and may seriously affect your health and personal security during travel. National standards of hygiene are different, food and water may be contaminated and animal and insect vectors of disease are different. The climate or environmental conditions may favor diseases which do not occur in the United States. Your health, safety, accident avoidance and security are your responsibility and should be considered before, during and after traveling.

2. **What should I do before I travel?** - The following recommendations provide general health-related advice for the international travel. For your individual situation, you should seek travel health advice related to where you are traveling from a trained professional.
 - a. You should contact a physician or travel medicine clinic at least 4 to 6 weeks before travel in order to allow enough time for any immunizations that may be required to be completed. This is especially true for those planning travel to tropical areas or developing countries. A health professional will be able to assess your individual need for immunizations or preventative medication depending on your health situation, previous immunization history and your travel itinerary.
 - b. You should ensure that your routine immunizations- diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella and varicella- are up-to-date.
 - c. Influenza vaccination is routinely recommended in the United States for all persons 6 months of age and older. The timing and length of the flu season in other counties may be different from what usually happens in the United States. For this reason, if you did not receive an influenza vaccination during the season before you will travel, you should get one before you leave.
 - d. Immunizations to prevent typhoid and hepatitis A are recommended for travelers to areas where sanitary conditions are poor.
 - e. In travel to remote areas or where special risks exist, immunizations against meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, European tick-borne encephalitis, hepatitis B or rabies may be recommended.
 - f. Yellow fever vaccination is mandatory for entry into some countries in Central Africa and South America. Travelers to these countries must have an international certificate of vaccination to certify that they have had yellow fever vaccination. Additional countries, while not requiring proof of vaccination for travelers arriving direct from the United States, do require a yellow fever certificate if there has been a stop-over in a country

where yellow fever occurs. Even when not required, yellow fever vaccination is recommended for travelers to areas where the disease is present.

- g. If you are traveling to a country or area where malaria occurs, you will need to obtain a sufficient supply of anti-malarial medication to begin taking the drug before departure, for the whole duration of travel in the malarial area, and after leaving the area. The actual medication to be taken will vary depending on the particular type of malaria present in the country or area to be visited and whether or not resistance to drugs has developed. Preventing malaria in travelers includes personal protective measures to reduce the risk of mosquito bites, as well as the appropriate use of anti-malarial medications. Travelers to areas where there is a risk of malaria should consult a physician or travel medicine clinic in order to obtain individualized advice regarding malaria prevention during travel.
- h. If you require medication for existing medical conditions, take a sufficient supply for all your needs during travel. These must be in clearly labeled containers and a copy of the doctor's medical prescription should be carried. Essential medication should be divided and stored in two different pieces of luggage, so that if one piece of luggage is delayed, lost or stolen, an alternate supply is available.
- i. It is also recommended that a medical certificate of explanation be carried, should a physician advise that a supply of sterile syringes and needles be carried for use by qualified health personnel in an emergency situation. The use of these sterile items will prevent the possible transmission of AIDS, hepatitis B and other diseases from contaminated needles and syringes. However, in many countries where illicit drug trafficking is a problem, a traveler found carrying syringes without adequate explanation and medical certification, can be in serious trouble with police authorities.

3. What should I do while traveling?

- a. To prevent dengue fever, malaria, and other mosquito-transmitted diseases avoid mosquito bites. Use insect repellents during the day and especially between dusk and dawn. Sleep in well-screened or air conditioned accommodation or use bed nets, preferably impregnated with an insecticide. Wear trousers and long sleeves at dawn and dusk wherever possible.
- b. When engaged in outdoor activities in sunny locations, use sun-block (SPF 15 or greater) regularly, especially if you are taking medications (such as tetracycline) which increase skin sensitivity to the sun.
- c. Traveler's diarrhea or "*tourista*" is usually caused by differences in water purity consumed while traveling. The water in some countries can contain organisms which will cause diarrhea in those not accustomed to them. Because the United States' municipal water supplies are treated to remove most waterborne organisms, travelers from the United States will experience diarrhea if they consume local water, or food prepared with local water in less developed countries. To prevent traveler's diarrhea, only drink purified water or commercially bottled beverages, and pasteurized milk and dairy products. Avoid

ice, salads, reheated foods, uncooked shellfish and any food from street vendors. Also choose fruit that you can peel, and brush your teeth with purified water.

- d. Swim in fresh water only if you know that it is free of Schistosomiasis, a parasite found in the Caribbean, South America, Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. These parasites can penetrate unbroken skin and cause an infection of the bowel or the bladder.
- e. To prevent sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, syphilis, Hepatitis B and AIDS, use a condom if you intend to have sex with strangers while traveling. AIDS and hepatitis B vary in occurrence from country to country. To avoid bloodborne diseases like AIDS or Hepatitis C, assure any injections use only safe injection techniques with sterile unused equipment.
- f. You should be safety and security conscious during travel. Economic conditions in lesser developed countries can cause increased crime rates and tourists are often targeted. Do not walk alone in remote areas, back streets or beaches, where there may be risk of personal attack or bag snatching. Valuables should be left at home or deposited in hotel safes. Traveler's checks, cash, passports and tickets should not be carried in bags that can be snatched. The use of a body belt for these essential travel items is strongly recommended. Photocopies can of important travel documents (passports, visas and airline tickets) can be carried instead of the original documents to prevent loss.
- g. Do not ride in over-crowded vehicles or on motorcycles. If using or renting motor vehicles ensure that they have seat belts, and use them. Traffic patterns in many countries can be confusing or chaotic. Exercise care while walking or crossing traffic to avoid pedestrian injuries.

4. **What should I do after traveling?**

- a. Take your anti-malarial medication for the full course as prescribed.
- b. If you have traveled to an area where malaria occurs and you develop fever during the first year after return (especially in the first two months) see your health care provider immediately and remind him/her that you have recently traveled to an area where malaria occurs;

5. **Bon Voyage:** Staying healthy during travel is usually just a matter of common sense, with extra attention given to insect, food, water and security precautions. With minimal alteration in lifestyle, your trip can be an exciting, healthy and rewarding adventure.

6. **For more information about Traveler's Health:** <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx> and <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/content/yellowbook/home-2010.aspx>

This fact sheet provides general information. Please contact your physician and/or veterinarian for specific clinical information related to you or your animal.

