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## International Travel: Tips for Staying Healthy

Here are some tips to help you stay healthy when you travel to other countries:

### Before you go

- Plan ahead. If you need any immunizations or vaccinations, see your doctor at least 6 weeks before you leave. Some vaccines don't reach the highest protection until about 6 weeks after you get the shots.
- Have medical and dental check-ups before your trip, to be aware of problems and to find out about medicines you might need to take with you.
- Be prepared. Find out what your health insurance will pay for if you see a doctor while you're in another country. Carry enough of your regular medicines in their original containers, along with extra prescriptions for them. Also bring your eyewear prescriptions. Wear a medical information bracelet if needed. Take a first-aid kit (see suggestions below).

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### Vaccines you might need

Your doctor will review the plans for your trip and decide whether you need any vaccines. The vaccines you got when you were a child also may need to be updated if you are not fully protected. Vaccines that you may need include the following:

- Hepatitis A or hepatitis A immune globulin
- Hepatitis B
- Influenza (the flu)
- Japanese encephalitis
- Measles-mumps-rubella
- Meningococcal meningitis
- Pneumococcal
- Polio
- Rabies
- Tetanus and diphtheria toxoids
- Typhoid fever
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Yellow fever

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### A note about vaccines

Sometimes the amount of a certain vaccine cannot keep up with the number of people who need it. [More info...](#)

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## While you're traveling

- Eat carefully if you're going to a country with an increased risk of traveler's diarrhea. Steaming-hot, well-cooked food is usually safest. Avoid eating foods from street vendors, unpasteurized dairy products and raw or uncooked seafood. Peel fruits yourself. Drink water from commercially-sealed bottles or drink carbonated beverages. Avoid ice. Use bottled water when you brush your teeth.
- If you're going to a country with an increased risk of mosquito-borne disease, protect yourself against insects. Insect repellents that contain DEET work the best. Wear permethrin-coated clothing and use bed nets while you sleep.
- If you're going to a country with a risk of malaria, your doctor may prescribe preventive medicine for malaria. Remember to start taking your malaria medicine before you leave on your trip, take it during your travels and keep taking it for 4 weeks after you get home.
- Avoid swimming and other water activities in freshwater lakes and streams. Schistosomiasis (also called bilharziasis) is a disease you might be exposed to in some African streams and lakes.
- Try to avoid taking overcrowded transportation. Try not to ride in vehicles without safety belts. Wear a helmet if you'll be riding a motorcycle. Try to avoid driving at night or in unfamiliar areas without local help and directions.

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## Things to include in a first-aid kit for traveling

- Your prescription medicines, in their original containers.
- Medicine for diarrhea and upset stomach. Talk to your doctor about getting a prescription for an antibiotic you can take in case you get traveler's diarrhea. Pack bismuth subsalicylate (brand name: Pepto Bismol), loperamide (brand name: Imodium) and antacids.
- Cough and cold medicines.
- Pain medicines, such as aspirin, acetaminophen (one brand name: Tylenol), naproxen (brand name: Aleve) and ibuprofen (one brand name: Motrin).
- Decongestants and antihistamines for allergies. The kinds that don't cause sleepiness are better when you're traveling.
- Antibiotic ointment, adhesive bandages, hydrocortisone cream, moleskin for blisters, sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 and lip balm.
- Medicine for motion sickness, such as dimenhydrinate (one brand name: Dramamine). The prescription medicines promethazine and acetazolamide may help prevent nausea and altitude sickness.
- Scissors, tweezers, nail clippers, pocket knife, thermometer and a mirror.
- Hand wipes and hand sanitizers.

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## Other Organizations

- [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int/ith)  
<http://www.who.int/ith>
- [International Society of Travel Medicine](http://www.istm.org)  
<http://www.istm.org>
- [American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene](http://www.astmh.org/)  
<http://www.astmh.org/>
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov)  
<http://www.cdc.gov>

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## Source

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