

Healthy Summer Traveling

As summer begins, many families are preparing for vacations. Each year millions of people travel abroad and an even greater number travel within the United States. During these retreats, something will go wrong for some travelers, but you can take many precautions to prevent these woes—especially when it comes to health.

Planning Ahead

The first step to a successful vacation is planning ahead and learning about the area you will be visiting. According to a new survey, 4 in 10 Americans traveling to areas with high rates of malaria fail to carry antimalarial drugs. While most travelers believe vaccines are effective for prevention, only 1 in 3 was immunized against tetanus, fewer than 3 in 10 received hepatitis A shots, and only 1 in 10 was vaccinated against yellow fever.

If you are traveling abroad, visit the Traveler's Health Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>. Provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the site provides helpful information for specific destinations. The traveler chooses a destination by country or region and then is directed to specific information about the area. The Web site includes vaccination requirements and suggestions, special notices about disease outbreaks or disease activity, how to avoid disease or injury, and where to receive the appropriate vaccinations before traveling.

If travel is inside the United States, preparation is not quite as complicated, but planning ahead will still lead to a more pleasant vacation. Research the area you will visit and plan accordingly.

Smart Preparation and Packing

Many aspects of packing are determined by the exact location and type of vacation planned. For example, packing for a beach vacation in Florida will differ from packing for a summer vacation in Alaska. Keep in mind the specific surroundings and terrain when deciding on clothing. Remember to pack the appropriate footwear and necessary gear, which will differ if the trip is centered on hiking and camping versus relaxing on the beach.

By packing appropriately, travelers can avoid making medication travel mistakes. The first step can be stopping by the pharmacy to be sure you have an ample supply of personal prescription medications and any nonprescription drugs you might need. Carry medications in personal bags rather than in checked luggage in case it is lost or stolen. If you take medications that require refrigeration, additional accommodations should be made to keep the medications cold. Pack coolers to store medications while traveling, and reserve a room with a refrigerator at your final destination.

Remember to bring along insurance identification cards and check with your insurance carrier about coverage while out of the state or country. Some companies offer traveler's insurance for vacationers who are traveling out of the country. Take immunization records and any other important medical records with you, especially when

traveling abroad. It is also a good idea to take along the name and phone number of your physician or pharmacy.

A first aid kit is also valuable on vacations. Purchase them already assembled or compile one yourself. Include self-adhesive bandages of all sizes, sterile gauze, elastic bandages, a thermometer, disposable ice packs, tweezers, cottonballs, antibiotic ointment, antiseptic solution, hydrocortisone cream, and a guide to first aid. A few extra additions to a first aid kit are analgesics, such as acetaminophen or aspirin; antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl); antidiarrheals, such as loperamide (Imodium); and antacids for upset stomach.

Common Traveling Woes to Prepare For

Motion sickness: Motion sickness is a common problem for travelers, especially women and children. Nearly all of the passengers on a boat during rough seas will have motion sickness. Symptoms include dizziness, nausea, vomiting, pallor, and cold sweats.

Passengers can take steps to avoid motion sickness by choosing seats toward the front of a bus, train, or other vehicle or by lying down during the ride. Avoid reading and focus on objects in the distance rather than on something in close proximity, which will decrease head movement. Medications are available to prevent or control motion sickness. The following table from the CDC is a good resource for these medications.

Dosages of antimotion sickness medications

| Medication | Dose | Contraindications | Adverse effects | Comments |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Scopolamine (Trans-derm Scop) Tablets | Patch: change every 72 hours. Apply to hairless area behind ear. Oral: 0.4 to 0.8 mg every 6 to 8 hours | Gastrointestinal or bladder neck obstruction (e.g., prostatic hypertrophy), liver or kidney disease, risk for narrow-angle glaucoma | Dry mouth, bradycardia, blurred vision (especially in hyperopic individuals), decreased memory for new information, decreased attention and alertness | Useful for long journeys. Do not touch eyes after applying patch. Contraindicated in children. |
| Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) | Adult: 25 to 50 mg up to 4 times per day. Children: 1.25 mg/kg, up to 25 mg. Can be repeated every 6 hours | Use with caution in people with asthma, cardiac arrhythmias, pyloric or bladder neck obstruction, narrow-angle glaucoma. | Drowsiness, thickened respiratory secretions, dry mouth, blurred vision, paradoxical excitation in children | |
| Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) | Adult: 25 to 50 mg up to 4 times per day. Children: 1 mg/kg, up to 25 mg | As for dimenhydrinate | As for dimenhydrinate | |
| Promethazine (Phenergan) | Adult: 25 to 50 mg up to 4 times per day. | As for dimenhydrinate | As for dimenhydrinate; hypotension, abnormal movements | May be combined with ephedrine to help maintain alertness. |

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| | | | | Primarily controls nausea. Not recommended for children. |
| Meclizine (Bonine) | 25 to 50 mg daily | Asthma, narrow-angle glaucoma, bladder neck obstruction | Drowsiness, dry mouth, occasional blurred vision | Not recommended for children. |

Sunburn: Many vacations focus on outdoor activities so it is important to remember the dangers of overexposure to the sun. Skin cancer is the most common malignancy in the United States. In 2006, more than 1 million Americans will be newly diagnosed with skin cancer, and 7,910 deaths will be attributed to melanoma. Risk factors for melanoma include white skin, fair hair, light eyes, family history of melanoma, and tendency to freckle. The best way to avoid sunburn and skin cancer is to stay out of the sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when ultraviolet rays are the strongest. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends using a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 for basic protection if you are going to be in the sun for more than 20 minutes. Apply sunscreen to dry skin 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every 2 hours. Seek shade whenever possible and remember to pack a large-brimmed hat and sunglasses for extra protection. If you get sunburned, no treatment will improve healing time, but cold compresses, emollients, topical anesthetics, and oral acetaminophen or NSAIDs (aspirin or naproxen) can provide some symptom relief.

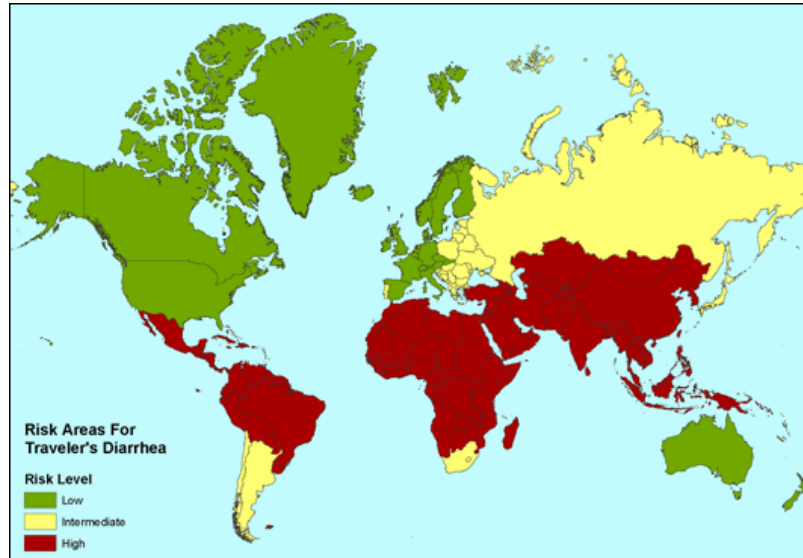
Traveler's diarrhea: Traveler's diarrhea is defined as three or more unformed stools in less than 24 hours during or shortly after travel or any number of loose stools accompanied by fever, abdominal pain, cramping, or vomiting. This is a common and annoying problem affecting 20 to 50 percent of people traveling from developed into developing countries. Risk factors include geographical location, local water quality, sewage disposal, and seasonality of the pathogens. Traveler's diarrhea is transmitted through food and water that has been contaminated with fecal material, including swimming pools and freshwater lakes. A variety of bacteria, viruses, and protozoans can cause traveler's diarrhea, but in more than 50 percent of cases *E. coli* is the cause.

Prevent traveler's diarrhea by making educated decisions. First, avoid eating and drinking high-risk foods. A good tip to remember is "Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it." Eat foods that are freshly cooked and served hot, and avoid water and beverages diluted with water, such as reconstituted fruit juices, ice, and milk, and foods washed in water, such as salads. Other risky foods include raw or undercooked meat and seafood and raw fruits and vegetables. Safe beverages include those that are bottled and sealed, carbonated, boiled, or treated with iodine or chlorine. Food and beverages from street vendors and prepared foods or buffet items pose a particularly high risk. Currently, no antibiotics are approved or recommended for the prevention of traveler's diarrhea.

Managing traveler's diarrhea depends on the severity of the disease. In most cases, it is self-limiting and does not require antibiotic treatment. If this is the case, stay hydrated by drinking water to keep your body's electrolytes in balance. In moderate to severe cases (more than 6 stools in 24 hours), seek medical attention because antibiotics

may be necessary. Sometimes physicians prescribe antibiotics before a vacation in case they are needed later, but such action is controversial.

Risk Areas for Traveler's Diarrhea



Special Travelers and Travels

While traveling can be a challenge for a healthy adult, some travelers have more adversities to overcome for a fun vacation. The CDC offers specific information for travelers who may be pregnant, are elderly, have special needs, or are traveling with children or pets. Information on cruise ships and cruise ship safety is also available. For more information for special travelers or cruises, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/> .

Happy Travels!

After reading the above precautions and hazards, you might ask yourself if traveling is worth the risk. The answer is yes if you prepare and use good judgment and

common sense. As you begin to pack your bags, remember to adequately plan and research for the journey, whether traveling abroad or just around the corner. Be sure to stock up on prescription medications as well as any nonprescription drugs needed for the trip. Pack other essentials such as a first aid kit, sunscreen, and proper clothing and supplies. Before departing to another country, check any regulations and requirements and insurance matters. Adequately prepare for any travel woes that may come along. A final and very important tip for travelers is to wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand gel with at least 60 percent alcohol to clean your hands. This is a simple way to make the trip a little less risky, and it is a good idea at home too. Finally, remember to be safe, travel smart, and have a wonderful vacation! Bon voyage!

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