

SAFE INTERNATIONAL TRAVELING: QUICK TIPS

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL CLINIC | CENTER FOR HEALTH PROMOTION | LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH

WHAT TO DO WHEN INJURED OR SICK

If you or a travel companion gets an injury or sickness that can't be helped with basic first aid or an over-the-counter medicine, seek medical attention right away.

These tips are meant to offer general travel guidance only. Since everyone's health needs are different, check with your doctor before your trip for official medical advice.

Wash your hands. Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

Avoid bug bites. Use *insect repellent* and take other steps to avoid bug bites, such as wearing long sleeved shirts and pants. Bugs, including mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, and flies, can spread diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, Zika, dengue, chikungunya, and Lyme. These bugs are typically more active during warm weather. If also using sunscreen, always apply insect repellent after sunscreen. Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- registered insect repellents with one of the active ingredients below. When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women:

- DEET
- Picaridin (known as KBR 3023 and icaridin outside the US)
- IR3535
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)
- Para-menthane-diol (PMD)
- 2-undecanone

Treat clothing and gear with *Permethrin*: Permethrin is an insecticide that kills or repels insects like mosquitoes and sand flies. Use 0.5% permethrin to treat clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents) or buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear. Permethrin-treated clothing provides protection after multiple washings. Read product information to find out how long the protection will last. Permethrin may be purchased at any outdoor supply store or online.

Choose safe food and drink. Contaminated food or drinks can cause travelers' diarrhea and other diseases and disrupt your travel. Travelers to low or middle income destinations are especially at risk. Generally, foods served hot are usually safe to eat as well as dry and packaged foods. Bottled, canned, and hot drinks are usually safe to drink.

Travelers' diarrhea is the most common travel-related illness. It can occur anywhere, but the highest-risk destinations are in Asia (except for Japan and South Korea) as well as the Middle East, Africa, Mexico, and Central and South America. In otherwise healthy adults, diarrhea is rarely serious or life-threatening, but it can make a trip very unpleasant. The best way to prevent illness is to regularly wash hands and by consuming safe foods. Some ways to treat travelers' diarrhea include:

- Drink lots of fluids to stay hydrated. In serious cases of travelers' diarrhea, oral rehydration solution—available online or in pharmacies in developing countries—can be used for fluid replacements.
- Take over-the-counter drugs: Several drugs, such as loperamide, can be bought over-the-counter to treat the symptoms of diarrhea. These drugs decrease the frequency and urgency of needing to use the bathroom, and may make it easier for you to ride on a bus or airplane while waiting for an antibiotic to take effect.
- Only take antibiotics if needed: Your doctor may give you antibiotics to treat travelers' diarrhea, but consider using them only for severe cases. If you take antibiotics, take them *exactly* as your doctor instructs. If severe diarrhea develops soon after you return from your trip, see a doctor and ask for stool tests so you can find out

which antibiotic will work for you.

Be safe around animals. Avoid animals, including pets, local farm animals, and wild animals. In addition to the risk of rabies, all animal bites carry a risk of bacterial infection.

Protect yourself from the sun. Apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher when traveling. Protecting yourself from the sun isn't just for tropical beaches—you can get a sunburn even if it's cloudy or cold. You are at the highest risk for UV exposure when you are traveling during summer months, near the equator, at high altitudes, or between 10 am to 4 pm. The following are additional tips on sunscreen use:

- Use sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher.
- Ensure your sunscreen “blocks UVA and UVB” or has “broad spectrum” on the label.
- Apply sunscreen to create a thick layer on the skin at least 20 minutes before you are put in the sun.
- Apply sunscreen to all exposed skin, including ears, scalp, lips, neck, tops of feet, and backs of hands.
- Reapply at least every 2 hours.
- Reapply each time you get out of water or sweat heavily.
- If you are also using insect repellent, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second. Follow product label instructions to determine how often you need to reapply insect repellent and sunscreen.

Be careful during water activities. Drowning is a major cause of death when traveling. Follow water safety recommendations, which includes swimming, boating and diving, especially in countries where emergency services may not be quickly available.

Prevent Altitude Sickness. If you plan to travel to an elevation higher than 8,000 feet above sea level or higher, you may be at risk for altitude illness, which is caused by low oxygen levels in the air. Below are tips you can follow to prevent altitude illness.

- Ascend gradually. Avoid traveling from a low elevation to an elevation higher than 9,000 feet (2,750 m) above sea level in one day. If possible, spend a few days at 8,000–9,000 feet before traveling to a higher elevation. This gives your body time to adjust to the lower oxygen levels.

- Once you are above an elevation of 9,000 feet, increase where you will sleep by no more than 1,600 feet per day. For every 3,300 feet you ascend, try to spend an extra day at that elevation without ascending further.
- Do not drink alcohol or do heavy exercise for at least the first 48 hours after you arrive at an elevation above 8,000 feet.
- Traveling to elevations greater than 9,000 ft for 2 nights or more, within 30 days before your trip, can help avoid altitude illness on a longer trip at a high elevation.
- Consider taking day trips to a higher elevation and then returning to a lower elevation to sleep.
- Medicines are available to prevent acute mountain sickness and shorten the time it takes to get used to high elevations. Talk to your doctor about which is best for you given your medical history and trip plans.

Acute mountain sickness (AMS) is the mildest form of altitude sickness. Symptoms include:

- Headache
- Tiredness
- Lack of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Children who cannot yet talk may just seem fussy

Mild cases can be treated by easing symptoms, for example using pain relievers for a headache. Symptoms should go away on their own within a couple days.

People with altitude illness should not travel to higher elevations until they no longer have symptoms. A person whose symptoms get worse while resting should travel to a lower elevation to avoid becoming seriously ill or dying.

Choose safe transportation. Always wear a seat belt, and children should ride in car seats. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among healthy travelers. Be alert when crossing the street, especially in countries where people drive on the left side of the road. Always maintain vigilance of your surroundings.

Maintain your health. Pack a travel kit with prescriptions, over the counter medications, first aid items, travel insurance information and other documentation that you may need while traveling. For country-specific



updated travel recommendations, please visit www.cdc.gov/travel

TRAVEL KIT MEDICATION ITEMS

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Over the counter (OTC) medications for symptom relief	
Upset stomach	Antacids (Pepto-Bismol liquid or tablets) Tums H2 blocker (Cimetidine, Ranitidine)
Diarrhea	Loperamide (Imodium)
Rash or insect bites	Hydrocortisone cream Diphenhydramine cream (Benadryl cream) Diphenhydramine oral (Benadryl)
Pain or fever	Anti-inflammatory medications: Naproxen (Aleve) Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) Aspirin Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
Nausea/vomiting, motion sickness	Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine)

Miscellaneous supplies to consider	
Sunscreen	Many brands, SPF 15 or greater
Insect repellent	DEET (Off, etc.), use 30% or less Picaridin (Cutter, Bayrepel) Permethrin (application to clothing and gear)
Water filtration	Personal water bottle filtration devices (Larq, Brita, etc.) A filter (certified by NSF Standards 53 or 58) will remove parasites if it is used properly. It will not remove viruses or all bacteria.
Hand sanitization	Hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or greater)

For additional advice, scan below to access the CDC Traveler Advice site:

