

## Health Tips for Travelers

### Risk From Food and Water

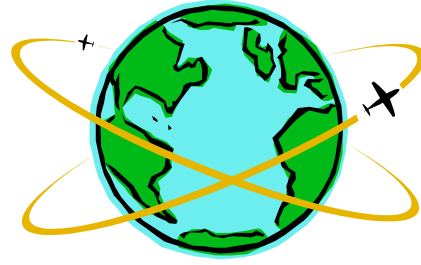
Certain diseases and illnesses can easily be transmitted in food and water. Bacteria, viruses and parasites may be found in certain foods, drinking water and lakes. Hepatitis A, e-coli, salmonella, rotavirus, cholera and typhoid are among the more commonly talked about infections. There are vaccines to help prevent against hepatitis A and typhoid fever. Unfortunately, there are not vaccines and medications to prevent against most and prevention is the best means to decrease the chance of disease transmission. Use the following precautions to avoid transmission of illnesses in contaminated food and water especially in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate.

- ✓ Avoid raw fruits, vegetables, unpasteurized milk, cheeses, undercooked and raw meat, fish and shellfish.
- ✓ Avoid consumption of food and beverages obtained from street vendors.
- ✓ Drinking Water. In areas where hygiene and sanitation are poor it is best to only drink canned or bottled beverages. Beverages, such as tea and coffee, made with boiled water, beer and wine are considered safe.
- ✓ Keep in mind ice for beverages may be contaminated as well.
- ✓ Boiling, chemical disinfection and water filters are methods that can be used to disinfect contaminated water. Boiling water for 1-3 minutes is the most reliable method. Chemical disinfection involves adding tincture of iodine or tetraglycine hydroperiodide tablets to water according to manufacture recommendations. These products can be found at sporting good stores and pharmacies.
- ✓ Avoid swimming in freshwater lakes and rivers. Water may be contaminated by other people and from sewage, animal wastes and wastewater run-off. Accidentally swallowing water and any skin scrape or cut may serve as an entry point for infection.
- ✓ Pools containing chlorinated water can be considered safe as long as adequate pH is maintained.

### Traveler's Diarrhea

This is a common illness that affects many travelers. Antibiotics are not currently recommended to prevent traveler's diarrhea. The above recommendations and practicing good handwashing are ways prevent the transmission of bacteria, viruses and parasites that may cause diarrhea.

- According to the CDC, Pepto-Bismol taken daily may help to prevent or reduce traveler's diarrhea. This should not be used for greater than 3 weeks. Pepto-Bismol should be avoided in those with an allergy to aspirin, are pregnant or are taking anticoagulants, probenecid or methotrexate. Blacking of the tongue or stool may occur as a side effect.
  - If you develop diarrhea increase your fluid intake to avoid dehydration. Seek medical attention if you develop a fever, bloody stools, nausea, vomiting or abdominal cramping.
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### **Risk From Insect Bites**

There are many insect-borne diseases that exist worldwide. Depending on your destination anti-malaria medication or yellow fever vaccine may be recommended. The best protection is avoidance of insect bites.

- Use an insect repellent with DEET concentration as strong as 50%.
- Wear clothing that covers up as much of your skin as possible.
- Stay indoors from dusk to dawn as much as possible. Insects may be most active during this time.
- Use bed nets impregnated with permethrin. These can be purchased at sporting good stores.

### **Carry a Medical Kit**

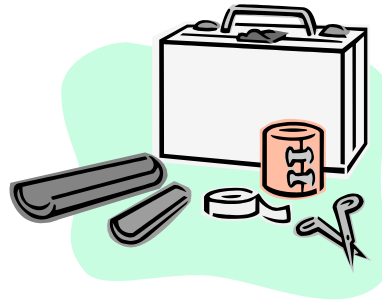
✓ Take a standard first aid kit.

✓ Bring an extra supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication that you take regularly. In some cases, it may be recommended to obtain written authorization from the prescribing provider to travel with your medications. Distribute in different pieces of luggage in case a piece of your luggage gets lost or stolen.

✓ Take an extra supply of eye glasses and contact lenses. For contact lens wearers, practice careful handwashing to avoid transmission of infection into the eyes. Consider obtaining a prescription of antibiotic eye ointment in the event that an infection develops.

✓ Other items to include:

- Anti-motion sickness medication
- Pepto-Bismol
- Imodium
- Mild laxative
- Pain relievers such as tylenol or ibuprofen
- Antacid
- Antifungal ointment
- Antibacterial ointment
- 1% hydrocortisone cream
- Antibacterial hand wipes and gels
- Sunscreen



### **Additional Resources:**

The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a website with specific disease and illness risk according to country destination. This can be found on the internet at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) click on Traveler's Health.

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If you become seriously ill, a United States consular office can assist in locating appropriate medical services. Before you leave the United States, find the contact information for the consulate in the country you will be visiting. You can obtain this information on the internet at <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.

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