

**Have a safe
and healthy
trip!**



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Healthy Traveling Guide

**Wake County Human Services
10 Sunnybrook Road
Raleigh, NC 27610
919-250-3900**



This booklet briefly discusses important topics often asked by people traveling abroad. For additional information, please consult the resources listed on the last page of this booklet or call 919-250-3885.

We hope your travels are safe, healthy, and happy!

Wake County Human Services Foreign Travel Staff

FOOD AND WATER SAFETY

Contaminated food and drink are the reason many people get stomach upset, diarrhea and vomiting while traveling. Many different diseases are spread through food and water. Some also spread when people who are handling food do not wash their hands well. Get the CDC's "Can I Eat This?" smart phone app to use while traveling.



Food

Choose food carefully to avoid illness. Protect yourself by following these guidelines:

- **The basic rule is: boil it, peel it, cook it, or forget it!**
- Eat foods that have been well cooked and are still hot.
- Avoid salads and raw vegetables.
- Don't eat fruits and vegetables that cannot be peeled, unless they have been cooked.
- Peel fruits and vegetables yourself. Wash your hands, the knife and the fruit or vegetable with clean water before peeling. Don't eat the peelings.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked meats, fish or shellfish.
- Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and milk products (cheese).
- Avoid food and drinks sold by street vendors.
- Do not eat bush meat (local wild game like bats, monkeys, rodents etc.)



Breastfeeding is the best way to make sure your infant gets food that is safe. Formula made from commercial powder and boiled water is also safe and practical.

FIND OUT MORE— KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Pre-travel health information by destination.

Website: www.cdc.gov/travel

International Travelers' Information line:

1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)

IAMAT -International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers

Information about immunization requirements for all countries, health risks, and how to get health care when traveling internationally.

website: www.iamat.org

Information line: 716-754-4883

U.S. Department of State

Tips on overseas travel, emergency information, passports, visas, etc.

Website: www.state.gov

Overseas travel: www.travel.state.gov

Hotline for American travelers: 1-202-501-4444

World Health Organization

Provides information on main health risks for international travelers.

Website: www.who.int

General information: email info@who.int

MEDICAL CARE ABROAD

The U.S. State Department provides a free travel registration service to U.S. citizens who are traveling or living abroad. Registration in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) allows you to record information about your trips that the Department of State can use in case of an emergency. The nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can usually give names of hospitals, physicians or emergency medical service agencies.



For more information, visit the *U.S. Department of State's Travel Registration* website at <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Before leaving home, you should contact your insurance company to learn what medical services your health insurance will cover while living or traveling abroad.

AFTER TRAVELING ABROAD



Most people who get infections abroad get sick within 6 weeks after returning home. However, symptoms of some diseases may not develop for as long as a year, as can be the case with malaria. You should always tell your doctor where you have traveled during the 12 months before you became sick.

This will help the doctor look for illnesses which may not be common in the U.S., but that may be common in the countries where you were traveling.

Water



- Only drink water that has been bottled, boiled, filtered, or treated.
- Make sure tea and coffee boil for 1 minute.
- Bottled or carbonated drinks without ice are usually safe choices. However, sometimes tap water is sealed into bottles with a drop of glue so that they seem “sealed”. It is harder to do this with carbonated drinks. Clean and dry the area of a can or bottle that will touch the mouth. Water found on the tops of beverage cans or bottles may be contaminated.
- Avoid ice, popsicles, or shaved ice that could be made with untreated water.
- Use bottled, boiled or treated water to brush teeth.

Making Water Safe to Drink

Boiling

Boiling water is the best way to make water safe to drink. Boiling water kills bacteria, viruses, and parasites that cause diarrhea. Bring water to a rolling boil for at least one minute. Do not add ice to cool.

Filtration

Portable water filters may remove some types of disease causing germs from drinking water. Check to make sure the filter you choose removes both bacteria and viruses.

Chemical and UV Light Treatment

Water can be treated with iodine or chlorine tablets which can be bought at sporting goods and drug stores. Follow product instructions.

Ultraviolet (UV) light is a method that destroys disease causing germs in small amounts of CLEAR water. UV light will not work if the water is cloudy.

For more information about water treatment and filters, visit the Centers for Disease Control website at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/water-disinfection>

Swimming

Swimming in contaminated water can cause skin, eye, ear, or intestinal infections. Generally only chlorinated pools are safe places to swim. Following these guidelines can help you avoid water related illnesses:

- Try not to get water in your mouth when swimming.
- Avoid beaches that may be contaminated with human sewage, pollution or animal feces.
- Do not put your head under water.
- Avoid swimming or wading when you have open cuts or wounds as they allow easy entry of disease-causing germs into the body.
- Avoid wading or swimming in freshwater streams, canals, and lakes. Parasites are likely to be found in freshwater in the tropics and sub-tropical areas of the world.
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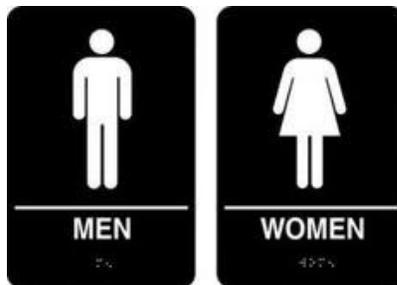
HEALTH CONCERNS WHILE TRAVELING

Traveler's Diarrhea

Traveler's diarrhea is the result of eating food or drinking beverages that are contaminated or swimming in contaminated water.

Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Bloating
- Urgency
- Generally not feeling well.



Injuries

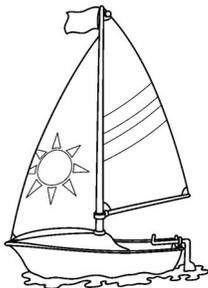
Injuries are the leading cause of preventable deaths in travelers.

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of injury-related deaths worldwide. Traffic rules differ around the world, roads may be poor and rules may not be strictly obeyed or enforced. People, horses or other animals, and a variety of vehicles such as bicycles, carts, trucks, and cars of all shapes and sizes may share the same road. Drive and walk defensively to avoid injury.

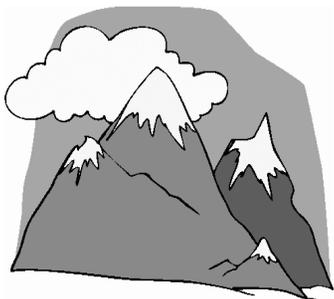


Motion Sickness

Travelers who have motion or sea sickness can often get relief or prevent symptoms altogether by using one of many products available for motion sickness. Ask your doctor or a pharmacist for a recommendation before you leave.



High Altitude



Traveling at high altitudes can cause you to be unable to sleep (insomnia), and have headaches, nausea or more serious problems. This can happen even if you are young and in good health. High altitudes can be particularly dangerous for people with heart or lung problems.

The best way to avoid altitude sickness is to move to higher altitudes slowly, taking time for your body to get used to each increase in altitude. There are several medications that help prevent and treat altitude sickness. Ask your health care provider for more information.

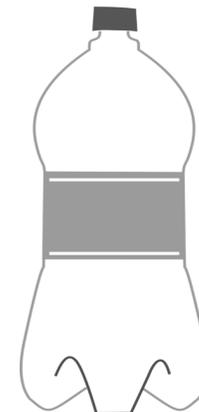
Blood Clots

The risk of getting a blood clot in the legs is higher for people who sit still for long periods in cramped conditions such as during air travel. Symptoms of a blood clot include redness, pain, cramps in the calves and swelling of the leg. Travelers at risk include people with a history of blood clots, women taking oral contraceptives or who are pregnant, people who have cancer or restricted mobility. If you are in one of these risk groups you should talk to your doctor before traveling by air.

Drink plenty of fluids, wear loose fitting clothes and get up regularly to stretch your legs when you travel.



The greatest risk from having traveler's diarrhea is dehydration, especially for infants, children and adults with long term medical problems. Prevent dehydration by drinking beverages that are bottled, boiled, filtered or treated (see page 3). If you become dehydrated, drink an oral rehydration solution prepared with purified water. These can be found at many stores and pharmacies all over the world.



Traveler's diarrhea usually goes away after a few days. You should get medical help if:

- Diarrhea is severe or bloody
- Diarrhea is not gone in a few days
- You have fever and chills along with the diarrhea
- You cannot stop vomiting

Traveling in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Central and South America increases your risk for getting travelers diarrhea. The risk of infection depends on where you are. Eating in private homes is the least risky, while eating food sold by street vendors is most risky.

The best way to prevent traveler's diarrhea is by choosing food and beverages carefully. **Antibiotics like Cipro are not recommended to prevent diarrhea** because they don't protect against diarrhea caused by viruses and parasites.

If you get diarrhea while traveling, medications such as Lomotil®, Imodium® or Pepto-Bismol® can decrease the number of diarrhea stools you have. Ask your doctor for a prescription for Cipro before leaving home. Fill your prescription and only take it if you have 3 or more episodes of diarrhea. You may take one tablet in the morning and one in the evening for one day to help slow diarrhea.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious health concern in many parts of the world. People are more likely to get TB when they are in a small space for a long time with a person who is sick with active TB disease. TB is spread through the air when someone who has active TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, sings or speaks. If you plan to travel for several months in areas of the world where TB is common, you should consider having a baseline TB skin test before traveling and be re-tested 8-10 weeks after returning. There are two types of TB treatment. One treats you if you are exposed to TB, the other treats you when you get sick with TB.

Diseases Spread by Mosquitoes

Diseases spread by the bite of an infected mosquito include Zika, chikungunya, dengue and malaria among others.

Zika is usually a mild disease with only 1 out of every 5 people with the disease having symptoms. Symptoms last up to a week and can include: fever, rash, joint pain and red eyes.

Pregnant or trying to get pregnant? Protect your baby from Zika

Zika can cause serious birth defects in babies born to women who are infected with Zika during pregnancy.

- Talk to your doctor about your risk of getting Zika.
- Don't travel to areas with Zika. The Zika virus keeps spreading to new areas. Visit www.cdc.gov/zika to get up-to-date information about which areas have Zika.
- Avoid mosquito bites (see page 8).
- Use condoms every time you have any kind of sex (*vaginal, oral, anal*) or don't have sex with people who have traveled to areas with Zika. The Zika virus stays in semen longer than in blood. More is being learned about Zika every day. Play it safe, use condoms!



Stress

International travelers often experience stresses that may make them more likely to get sick. They include:

- Crowding
- Change in usual eating and drinking habits
- Time changes that disturb usual patterns of sleeping and wakefulness



This type of stress can lead to nausea, indigestion, fatigue or not being able to sleep (insomnia). It may take a week or more to get used to these changes depending on how many time zones you cross.

Temperature

When it's very hot or humid, you can get heat exhaustion, heat stroke or hyperthermia. If you are traveling in hot, humid climates, drink plenty of liquids and find shade whenever you can.

Very cold temperatures can lead to hypothermia and frostbite if not properly dressed. Be especially careful with the elderly and babies in cold weather.

Sunburn

Ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun can cause sunburn, especially if you have light skin. You are more likely to get sunburns at higher altitudes and areas that are closer to the equator.



Protect your skin by:

- Using sunscreen or sun block
Follow product directions
- Wearing clothing with a tight weave
- Wearing wide brimmed hats
- Wearing sunglasses with 100% UV protection that wrap around the face

OTHER RISKS DURING TRAVEL

Snakes



Poisonous snakes are found worldwide, although deaths from snakebites are rare. The Australian brown snake, Russell's viper, cobras in southern Asia, carpet vipers in the Middle East and coral snakes and rattlesnakes in the Americas are particularly dangerous.

Snakes tend to be more active at night and in warm weather. Snakes that are startled or bothered may bite in self-defense. The venom of a small snake may be even more concentrated than that of a larger one, therefore all snakes should be left alone. Wear boots and long pants when walking outdoors in places known to have snakes.

Snakebite victims should be taken for medical treatment. First aid until medical treatment begins includes:

- Lay or sit down with the bite below heart level.
- Wash the bite with soap and water.
- Cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing.

Insects

The bites and stings of some insects can be painful. Many insects can also spread disease even without the person being aware of the bite. Be careful when camping or spending time outdoors. Insect repellents containing DEET, protective clothing and mosquito netting to cover sleeping areas are recommended in many parts of the world (See page 8).



Scorpion bites may be painful but not always dangerous. However, some of the most poisonous scorpions are found in Mexico. Since scorpions are more active at night, sleep under mosquito nets and shake out clothing and shoes before putting them on.

Chikungunya symptoms can include high fever, joint pain, headache, muscle pain, joint swelling and rash. Most people feel better in a week, but some people have long term joint pain.

Dengue is usually a mild disease—only 1 out of every 4 people with the disease have symptoms. Symptoms include: fever, headache, pain behind the eyes, joint and muscle pain and/or rash.

Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen if you have symptoms of dengue. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

Dengue symptoms can quickly become severe and even fatal for some people. Go to the doctor right away if you have any of these **warning signs**:

- stomach pain
- red spots on skin
- bleeding from nose or gums
- vomiting blood
- black stool
- tiredness
- clammy skin
- having a hard time breathing



Note: There is no vaccine or medicine to prevent or treat Zika, chikungunya or dengue.

Malaria can be a severe disease in many people and causes about 1 million deaths worldwide each year. Symptoms of malaria include: chills, muscle aches and tiredness and can start right away or up to a year after being infected.

You can get medication to prevent malaria from your doctor before you leave. The medication must be taken before, during and after travel as directed.

Preventing Mosquito Bites

The best way to prevent the diseases spread by mosquitoes is by preventing mosquito bites:

- Use air conditioning or window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If you are in a place where there are mosquitoes inside, sleep under a mosquito bed net.
- If you can, wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks.
- Treat or buy clothing with permethrin.
- Protect infants by using an infant carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.
- Use insect repellents with 30-50% DEET on skin:
 - ✓ If you need both sunscreen and repellent, use them separately, putting on the sunscreen first and then the repellent.
 - ✓ There is no need to put repellents on skin under clothing.
 - ✓ Follow the product label when using repellents.
 - ✓ For information about insect repellents and safety visit: www.cdc.gov/westnile/faq/repellent.html



Rabies Pre-exposure Vaccination

You should think about getting pre-exposure vaccination before traveling internationally if:

- You are likely to come in contact with animals in areas where rabies is present.
- Access to medical care, including vaccines, may be difficult.

Pre-exposure vaccination makes post-exposure treatment easier, but you will still need to be vaccinated after being exposed. Pre-exposure vaccine is a series of 3 shots given over 3-4 weeks that must be completed before leaving home.

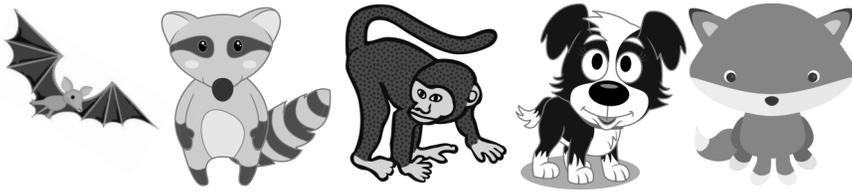
Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

STDs and HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) can spread through sex (oral, vaginal, anal).

Protect yourself:

- Get vaccinated against hepatitis B and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).
- Only have sex with one person who has been tested for STDs/HIV and is only having sex with you.
- Use condoms correctly **every** time you have any kind of sex (oral, vaginal, anal).
- Limit alcohol and don't use drugs—you may take more risks when you are drunk or high.





Rabies

Rabies is a serious disease that infects both domestic and wild animals in much of the world. The virus that causes rabies is spread through saliva, most commonly through animal bites. Rabies can also be spread by scratches or licks to broken skin and mucous membranes. Once symptoms of the disease begin, rabies nearly always kills both animals and humans.

Dogs are the main source of rabies in developing countries. However, all mammals can spread rabies including cats, monkeys, foxes, raccoons, skunks, wolves and bats.

Travelers who bicycle, camp, hike or spend time outdoors in rural areas are more likely to come into contact with animals even if their trip is short. However, stray dogs in cities and villages can also have rabies. Cavers should never handle bats nor sleep in places where bats are present. People are often bitten by bats without knowing they were bitten. Their teeth are so sharp you may not feel or see the bite. If you wake up in a room with a bat in it, you should be treated for rabies.

Travelers should never pet, handle or feed animals they do not know. Young children are more likely to be bitten or scratched and are less likely to report having been bitten.

If bitten or scratched by an animal, you should:

- Wash the area with soap and water right away.
- See a doctor.
- Report the bite to local health authorities to find out if rabies post-exposure treatment is needed.
- Contact your physician or county health department as soon as you return to the US.

Tick Borne Diseases

There are many diseases caused by ticks around the world. People who spend time outside should protect themselves.

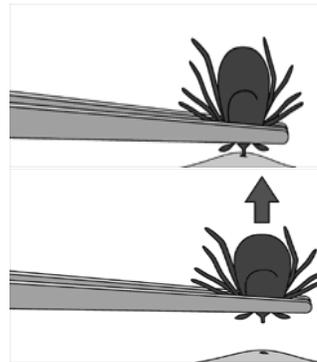
Note: There is no vaccine to prevent tick borne diseases!

Prevention:

- Avoid areas where ticks live (tall grasses, brushy areas, forests and leaf litter).
- Use insect repellants.
- Wear long sleeved shirts tucked into long pants. Tuck pants into socks.
- Take a shower after spending time outdoors.
- Do a tick check. Check skin and clothing for ticks.



Ticks rarely spread disease within the first 24 hours they are attached. Remove ticks right away to reduce the chance of getting sick from a tick.



- Use tweezers to firmly grasp the tick
- Pull the tick upward steadily
- Wash hands, tweezers and the bite area with soap and water
- Make a note of the date you removed the tick

If you get **flu-like symptoms or a rash in the month after a tick bite**, see a doctor and let them know you were bitten by a tick. Diseases caused by ticks can be treated with antibiotics. Early treatment helps shorten the length and severity of illness.

Bed Bugs

While bed bugs do not transmit disease, they are annoying for travelers and hard to get rid of if you bring them home. Bed bugs are small, flat insects that feed on people's blood while they sleep.



Bed bugs are found around the world, including in five-star hotels, hostels and cruise ships. Even beds and rooms that seem clean can have bed bugs.

Bed bugs are good at hiding. They can hide anywhere you can slide a credit card. Bed bugs spread from place to place as people travel. They hide in luggage, computer bags, purses, back packs, strollers, clothes, linens, etc. Most people do not realize they are transporting bed bugs as they move around.

To prevent bringing bed bugs home after traveling:

- Use a flashlight to inspect the mattress, box springs, headboard and luggage rack for bed bug "marks". Look for brown or black spots, white eggs and shed bed bug shells. Ask for another room if you see any bed bug "marks".
- Keep your luggage, bags and clothes off the floor and beds. Put them in the bathroom or on a hard surface. Dry clothing for 30 minutes on the highest heat setting when you return home (then wash and dry them again)
- Keep suitcases in the garage or in a sealed plastic bag (away from the bedroom) between trips.



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Ebola

Ebola is a severe and often deadly disease caused by a virus. The virus was first found in 1976 and there have been many outbreaks over the years. In 2014 there was a large outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. Over 11,000 people died. If possible, avoid traveling in areas where there is an active Ebola outbreak (www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/index.html).

Ebola spreads between people when broken skin or mucus membranes (the soft, moist areas at the openings of the body) touch:

- Body fluids of someone who is sick with or has died from Ebola.
- Things with body fluids on them from someone who is sick with or died from Ebola (used needles, clothes, bed linens etc).
- Infected wild animal meat hunted for food in Africa.
- Infected bats in Africa.

Ebola virus has been found in the semen of some men who have had the disease. Because of this, Ebola may also spread through sex. Until more is learned, condoms should be used when having sex with someone who has had Ebola.

Ebola virus is **not** spread through:

- Casual contact
- Air
- Water
- Food grown or legally purchased in the U.S.

Call your doctor right away if you:

- Were in a country in the last 21 days where Ebola was widespread **AND**
- You have fever, diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, fatigue, stomach pain, muscle pain, bleeding or bruising for no reason.

