General, Health, and Immunization Tips for Travelers

Personal health and health history
- Plan ahead. If you need any immunizations or vaccinations, see your health care provider at least 6 weeks before you leave. Some vaccines don’t reach the highest protection until about 6 weeks after you get the shots.
- Consider having a physical examination prior to travel.
- If you have an ongoing health problem, think about what type of support or treatment you might need while you are gone. Consider having your health care provider draft a letter explaining your condition and the current treatment plan.
- Be prepared
  - Take enough of your regular medicines in their original containers, along with extra prescriptions for them.
  - Find out what your health insurance will pay for if you see a health care provider while you are in another country.
  - Consider taking a first aid kit with over the counter medications that you may need (see suggestions below).

Vaccines
- Make sure that your current immunizations are current. The vaccines that you got as a child may need to be updated if you are not fully protected.
- Your health care provider will review your travel plans and discuss any additional recommended vaccines. You can check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for suggested immunizations for your destination (www.cdc.gov/travel)

Malaria prophylaxis
- Medications to protect you against malaria may be recommended with travel to certain destinations. Check the CDC website and discuss further with your health care provider.
- Many of these medications must be started 2 weeks prior to travel and continued 4 weeks after travel.

Health habits while traveling
- Eat carefully if you are going to a country with an increased risk of traveler’s diarrhea. In general, if the food and water supply is not safe, eat carefully. Boil it, cook it, peel it (yourself) or forget it. Eat only food cooked thoroughly and served hot, avoid re-warmed foods, drink only boiled or bottled water (including for tooth brushing, drink only bottled or canned beverages, avoid ice in drinks, avoid salads or other raw foods.
- Use antibacterial towelettes to clean hands and tops of bottled and canned foods.
- Good hand washing is essential.
- If you are going to a country with a risk of mosquito borne illnesses, protect yourself against insects. Insect repellents that contain DEET work the best. Wear protective clothing and use bed nets when you sleep.

First-aid kit for traveling
- Your prescription medicines.
- Medicine for diarrhea and upset stomach. Talk to your health care provider about getting a prescription for an antibiotic you can take in case you get traveler’s diarrhea. Pack bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto Bismol), loperamide (Imodium), and antacids.
- Cough and cold medicines.
- Pain medicines, such as aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), naproxen (Aleve) and Ibuprofen (Advil).
- Decongestants and antihistamines for allergies.
- Antibiotic ointment, adhesive bandages, hydrocortisone cream, moleskin for blisters, sunscreen with a SPF of at least 15, and lip balm.
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- Medicine for motion sickness, such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine). There are prescription medicine options available to prevent nausea and altitude sickness. You can discuss with your health care provider if this is something that you think you may need.
- Scissors, tweezers, nail clippers, pocket knife, thermometer, and a mirror.
- Hand wipes and hand sanitizers.

Suggestions for treatment of Traveler’s Diarrhea
- Imodium - 2 tablets after first stool, then two tablets after a second loose stool. With a third loose stool, consider beginning an antibiotic if you have one.
- Pepto Bismol - 2 tablets every 6 hours as needed. Can take with Imodium but must separate by 2 hours.
- Antibiotic - Consider taking an antibiotic if above fails.

Suggestions for treatment of Motion Sickness
- In a car or bus, sit in the front (or drive, if possible).
- In an airplane, sit over the wing.
- On a cruise ship, try to get a central cabin.
- Close your eyes or focus them on the horizon.
- Stimulating your other senses can distract you from the motion. Aromatherapy (mint or lavender), ginger candy, or other flavored lozenges may help.
- Medicines can be used to prevent or treat motion sickness, although many of them have the unwanted side effect of making you sleepy.
  - diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
  - dimenhydrinate (Dramamine)

Suggestions for treatment of Jet Lag
- Before Travel
  - Exercise, eat a healthful diet, and get plenty of rest.
  - A few days before you leave, start going to bed an hour or two later than usual (before traveling west) or earlier than usual (before traveling east) to shift your body’s clock.
  - Break up a long trip with a short stop in the middle, if possible.
- During Travel
  - Avoid large meals, alcohol, and caffeine.
  - Drink plenty of water.
  - On long flights, get up and walk around periodically.
  - Sleep on the plane, if you can.
- After You Arrive
  - Don’t make any important decisions the first day.
  - Eat meals at the appropriate local time.
  - Spend time in the sun.
  - Drink plenty of water, and avoid excess alcohol or caffeine.
  - If you are sleepy during the day, take short naps (20–30 minutes) so you can still sleep at night.
  - Sedating antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) can be helpful to help you sleep at night.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Family Doctor.org