



# Traveler's Health

It is important to research and plan ahead when traveling, especially outside the United States. Here is some information to help keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy while travelling.

- CDC's Travelers' Health website provides current information about common diseases and food and water safety by country or region at [www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/).

## General Tips for Staying Healthy When You Travel

- Clean your hands often. Wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if your hands are not visibly dirty. Important times to clean your hands are:
  - ◇ After using the bathroom or changing a diaper;
  - ◇ Before preparing or eating food
  - ◇ After blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing;
  - ◇ After caring for a sick person; and
  - ◇ After touching an animal
- Prevent spreading germs to others.
  - ◇ Cover your mouth or nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Immediately put used tissue in the waste basket, and then clean your hands.
  - ◇ If a tissue isn't available, use your upper sleeve to cover your cough or sneeze.
  - ◇ When you cough or sneeze into your hands, clean your hands immediately. Otherwise you will spread germs to everything and everyone you touch.
- Be aware that other people's cough and sneezes may contain germs that can make you sick. Stay 3 to 6 feet away from people coughing and sneezing if possible.
- Objects and surfaces that look clean can have disease-causing germs. Your best defense is to clean your hands frequently.
- Get plenty of rest and drink plenty of water to help your immune system.
- Be careful around all wild animals and domestic animals unfamiliar to you. If you are bitten, clean the wound with soap and water and consult a healthcare provider for further evaluation. Enjoy wild animals with your eyes, not by touching them.
- Check to see if your vaccinations are current, and find out if any others are recommended based on your travel destination.
- If you have a special health condition (e.g. diabetes or seizure disorder), wear a medical alert tag such as a bracelet or carry the information with you in case of an emergency.
- Put together a traveler's health kit including:
  - ◇ Enough of your prescribed medications and any medications your physician recommends (including over-the-counter medications) to last through your trip
  - ◇ Sunscreen
  - ◇ Insect repellent, ideally containing DEET or Picardin
  - ◇ Alcohol-based hand gels containing 60 to 95% alcohol to clean your hands when soap and clean water are not readily available.
- If any health issues arise during your trip, contact the local health jurisdiction.
- If you become ill after you return home, inform your doctor where you traveled.



## International Travel: Planning ahead is even more important

- Perform basic actions often such as hand hygiene, cough etiquette and insect protection to prevent exposure to many diseases while traveling.
- Travelers to underdeveloped countries are at greater risk than those who travel to developed countries, so research the health conditions well ahead of your trip, and plan accordingly.
- Get all recommended vaccinations in plenty of time before your trip. Ideally, you should visit a healthcare provider at least 4-6 weeks before travel, since many travel vaccines require multiple shots and take time to become fully effective.
- Use recommended protective medications for travel. Some medications need to be started before you travel. One example is preventative medicine for malaria.
- Select food with care, especially in areas where hygiene and sanitation are poor. All raw foods may be contaminated, so avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese. Eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot, or fruit that has been washed in clean water and then peeled personally.
- Avoid drinking untreated water, particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are poor. Drink bottle water to avoid dehydration.
- If you are pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about the risk of traveling and other precautions.



## Travel on Cruise Ships

- Identify and research all destinations and ports for health risks. Be sure to get vaccines and medications you need for a safe and healthy vacation.
- Review the cruise line or ship's inspection history when making travel plans. You will find that information of the CDC's Vessel Sanitation Program (VSP) at [www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp).
- If you see someone getting sick (vomiting or diarrhea), leave that area of the ship and wash your hands. Report the accident to the ship's staff immediately for safe cleanup.
- Eat cold foods that have been kept cold, and hot foods that have been kept hot. Avoid foods that have been left out of refrigeration too long.
- If you are sick before your cruise, call the cruise line to decide what you need to do to prevent others from becoming sick. Even after you have recovered, you can still spread germs.

