

TRAVEL HEALTH ADVICE



Travelling abroad, whether on business or for pleasure should be an exciting and enjoyable experience. However, it can carry potential health risks for you and your family.

By taking a few simple precautions it will allow an enjoyable trip and healthy travel.

BEFORE YOU GO.....

It is important to prepare your trip well in advance. Here are some general guidelines for getting ready.

- Visit the surgery and complete a travel health questionnaire at least 6 – 10 weeks before you leave. If you are travelling for more than a month, see them earlier.
- Book an appointment with the practice nurse. At this appointment the nurse will verify your travel details and issue you with an up to date and comprehensive information booklet and information regarding vaccinations / anti-malaria and disease outbreaks for your particular destination.
- Sort out your first aid kit and any medication you might need – including enough prescription medication for the trip.
- Read up about your chosen destination to learn about the culture, laws and customs.
- Check that your passport is valid and does not expire before you return.
- Check on visa requirements for your chosen destination.



VISIT TO THE PRACTICE NURSE

Short term travel: *1 – 4 weeks stay*

- Make sure your appointment is between 6 – 10 weeks before your departure wherever possible.

Long term travel : *1 month or longer*

- Make sure your appointment is at least a minimum of 3 months prior to travel wherever possible.

This visit is to ensure that your records are checked and the appropriate vaccinations required for your destination are offered and administered.

Please note that all vaccinations administered need to be given as a minimum 10 – 14 days prior to travel for full immunity to be reached.

The practice nurse will also discuss any anti-malaria protection needed for your destination which can also be prescribed.

Please note most anti-malaria medication can only be obtained with a private prescription.



MALARIA

Malaria is widespread in many countries and is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. You cannot be vaccinated against malaria but you can protect yourself.

Mosquitoes bite at any time of the day but mostly occur in the evenings.

Precautions You Can Take

- Avoid mosquito bites, especially after dusk / sunset.
- Wear long shorts or trousers whenever possible, especially at night.
- Use a good insect repellent, e.g. DEET, covering all the body (except face) during the key times.
- Before retiring to bed, spray bed with insect repellent.
- A plug in mosquito repellent should also be used.
- Do not leave windows open.
- Mosquito nets should be used where appropriate.
- Ensure an adequate supply of anti-histamine medication is taken with you in case an insect/mosquito bite occurs. The bite can cause a localised redness, swelling and itching, which an anti-histamine will help relieve.

Taking Your Anti-Malarials

- Prior to your travel you will have been advised of and prescribed an anti-malaria medication suitable for you and your particular destination.
- All anti-malarials need to be commenced PRIOR to your travel; again you will be advised when.
- At the back of this booklet is a list of all anti-malarial medication showing doses and common side effects.



Medication and First Aid

Medication

- If you take regular prescribed medication including OCP, please ensure prior to travel that you will be taking enough to cover your time away.
- In this current climate of extra security / precautions your particular airline may require documented evidence that the medication you carry is yours. The right hand side (the white piece) of your latest/current prescription should suffice, but it may well be worth checking with your tour operator / airline if other written confirmation is needed. If a GPs letter is required there will be a charge for this.

First Aid Kit For Travel

It is always a good idea to go prepared. Here is a basic list of items you may think about taking on your travels

Painkillers e.g. paracetamol and/or ibuprofen
Anti-diarrhoea i.e. loperamine
Anti-sickness tablets
Anti-histamine e.g. piriton, cetirizine (will also help prickly heat)

Rehydration e.g. dioralyte
Water purification tablets if appropriate
Anti-acids e.g. rennies
Plasters
Antiseptic cream
Scissors



Flying and Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

(economy class syndrome)

- Drink plenty of water as this can help minimise dehydration during your flight.
- Try and avoid alcohol
- Most airlines now provide information about prevention of a DVT; this includes stretching, leg exercises and ensuring adequate walking during your flight.
- Walking around the cabin area during a flight is now acceptable and it minimises the risk of DVT's occurring.
- Flight socks can be purchased, however, ensure that a measurement of your calf is taken prior to purchase. This is required along with your shoe size for a correct fit.
- Flight socks need to be put on before your flight and not removed until you've landed at your final destination. They can be hand washed and reused for future travel.



Protection Against Sun

Most people instantly feel more cheerful when the sun shines. However it's advisable to avoid too much exposure, particularly between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm when the sun is at its strongest. Use an appropriate strength sun block (at least SPF 15) and remember to re-apply it every two hours. Wearing a hat and sunglasses will help protect you in bright sunlight. If you have fair skin and/or red hair or know that you are susceptible to sunstroke or sunburn you should take extra care



Food and Drink

To avoid the risk of diarrhoea, vomiting or diseases such as typhoid and Hepatitis A, adhering to the following will help minimise the risks.

- Drink bottled water whenever possible
- In restaurants, ensure bottle is opened in front of you.
- Boil any drinking water you are unsure about wherever possible.
- Brush teeth using bottled water where possible or if unsure.
- Avoid ice in your drinks, and where ever else possible.
- Avoid shellfish, salads and fruits that you can't or haven't prepared yourself.
- Be cautious of ice-creams / lollies / soft cheeses as these are often made with unpasturised milk.
- Ensure hot / cooked food is piping hot, if not then avoid them.
- Avoid roadside vendors.
- Ensure hand hygiene maintained, never use communal towels in toilets etc.

Insurance

It is advisable to take out adequate medical insurance before departing. You may want to check that the insurance covers the cost of being flown home in an air ambulance. Take copies of all insurance documents and emergency telephone numbers when you travel.

When you buy your insurance, make sure it will cover the possessions you are taking with you. If you are carrying a laptop, mobile phone or camera think through the cost of replacement and consider paying for a top-up on the insurance if a basic policy will not cover it. Most policies have a single item limit and that might not cover your most expensive items.



Animals

Local animals can carry rabies so try and avoid close contact with them. If you are bitten, wash the wound and seek medical advice urgently, even if you have been previously vaccinated against rabies.

Safe Sex

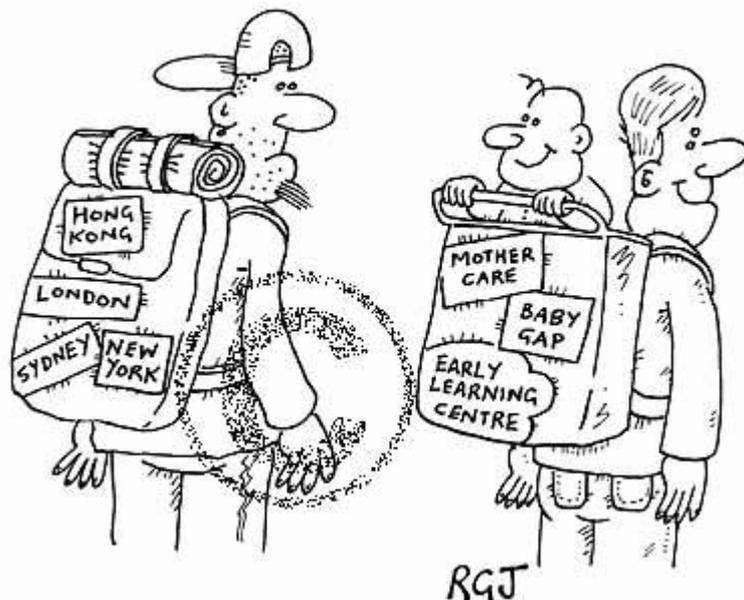
Hepatitis B, HIV and other infections are risks in all parts of the world in varying degrees and can be transmitted sexually. Therefore, casual sex is risky. Using condoms will provide good, but not 100% protection.

On Return

If you feel ill on your return, remember to tell your doctor you have been abroad, as early symptoms of some tropical diseases can mimic common UK illnesses. You may need to continue taking anti-malarial drugs for a period after you get home. Check the duration of your prescription with the practice nurse.

Gap Year / Back Packers

These travellers will need more extensive information / vaccinations so are advised to seek travel advice with a planned itinerary several months before planned travel date.



Useful Websites

www.masta.org

www.malariahotspots.co.uk

www.traveldoctor.co.uk

www.nathnac.org

This leaflet was produced by Debbie Sharpe and Cara Peacock .
Some information provided by GSK

Dr M E Glaze and Partners

May 2007

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