

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and other blood borne infections

Unprotected sex carries the risk of transmission of infections including gonorrhoea, chlamydia, hepatitis B and HIV. Many STIs are widespread throughout the globe and transmission can occur anywhere.

- Casual sex increases the risk of acquiring an STI and other diseases. Condoms provide some protection.
- Alcohol use and drug taking may provoke risky behaviour.
- As well as being transmitted through sex, HIV, hepatitis B and other viruses can be spread through invasive procedures and previously used equipment (e.g. an injection, blood transfusion, intra-venous drip, ear piercing, tattooing and body piercing).

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

DVT is a serious condition where blood clots develop in the deep veins of the legs. There is some evidence that long-haul flights, especially when passengers have little or no exercise may increase the risk of developing DVT.

There are ways that you can reduce the possible risk of DVT on long-haul flights:

- Bend and straighten your legs, feet and toes while seated every half-hour or so during the flight.
- Pressing the balls of your feet down hard against the floor or foot-rest will also help increase the blood flow in your legs and reduce clotting.
- Take occasional short walks, when in-flight advice suggests this is safe.
- Take advantage of refuelling stopovers where it may be possible to get off the plane and walk about.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Be sensible about alcohol, which in excess leads to dehydration and immobility.
- Avoid taking sleeping pills, which can also cause immobility.

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Special Advice for the Elderly

- Check you are up-to-date with all routine vaccinations.
- Ask your GP/Nurse about flu and pneumococcal vaccination – especially if you are going on a cruise holiday or to the southern hemisphere between April and November.
- Remember to take sufficient amount of any medication you normally take/have been prescribed with you in your hand luggage. A letter from your doctor outlining your treatments may also be useful.
- If you have severe respiratory or cardiac conditions, you may need to have a fitness to fly certificate. If in any doubt, ask your GP.

Special Advice for Pregnant Travellers

- Avoid travelling to countries where malaria occurs or where medical facilities will be poor.
- Check your insurance policy and with the airline to make sure you can travel at the stage of your pregnancy you will be at for both outward and return flights (28-32 weeks are the usual cut-off dates)
- Be particularly careful with food and water precautions.
- Check with your GP that you are fit to travel and take your antenatal notes with you.




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TOP TIPS: Healthy Travel Advice

Whether you are travelling on your own, with your family or on business, travel abroad is usually a time to enjoy. By following some simple steps, you can help to ensure that you and your family will have a happy, safe and healthy trip. The advice in this leaflet has been based on guidance provided by the Department of Health and should be used in conjunction with professional medical advice.

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PREVENTION is better than CURE

You can help prevent most common travel-related illnesses with simple precautions such as avoiding risky activities that may lead to accidents, taking care with food and water and preventing insect bites. You may also be advised to have vaccines prior to travel and for some areas anti-malarial precautions may be necessary.

It is essential that you have adequate travel insurance providing medical cover specific to your needs before travelling – illnesses and accidents can occur even among the best prepared travellers.

Vaccination only helps to protect you against some travel-related illnesses you may encounter, therefore it is important that you look at other ways to protect yourself.

Food and Water

- While travelling, follow strict food and water precautions and pay careful attention to hygiene. This will help to prevent diseases such as hepatitis A and typhoid fever and will also help guard against traveller's diarrhoea.

When travelling in countries where hygiene is poor:

- Always wash your hands after going to the lavatory, before handling food and before eating.
- If you have any doubts about the water available for drinking, washing food or cleaning teeth; boil it, sterilise it with disinfectant tablets or use bottled water – preferably carbonated with gas – in sealed containers.
- It is usually safe to drink hot tea or coffee, wine, beer, carbonated water and soft drinks, and packaged or bottled fruit juices.
- Eat freshly cooked food which is thoroughly cooked and still piping hot.
- Avoid food which has been kept warm
- Avoid uncooked food, unless you can peel or shell it yourself.
- Avoid food likely to have been exposed to flies.
- Fish and shellfish can be suspect in some countries. Uncooked shellfish, such as oysters, are a particular hazard.
- Avoid ice-cream from unreliable sources, such as kiosks or street traders.
- Avoid – or boil – unpasteurised milk.

Sun Protection

Every year, thousands of people damage their skin with sunburn. The long-term effects of this damage include premature skin ageing and skin cancer.

- Protection is even more important for children and those with fair skin.
- Avoid exposure when the sun is most harmful – normally at least two hours either side of midday.
- Ideally, protect your skin with clothing.
- Wear a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Use sun-block or sunscreen with sun protection factor 15 (SPF 15) or above. Re-apply after swimming or washing.
- Avoid overheating and dehydration – drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids. Offer frequent drinks to children.

Accidents and Crime

Accidents are more common than we would like to imagine. They are one of the main causes of emergency repatriation and death abroad. Crime is also a serious factor you must consider when travelling. The following tips are not exhaustive but could prove useful.

- Find out about the places you intend to visit through your tour operator or buy a reliable travel guidebook.
- Avoid displaying watches, jewellery etc
- Remember that alcohol clouds judgement
- Use of illegal drugs is dangerous
- Know the fire escape routes in your accommodation
- Avoid motorcycles and mopeds; wear a helmet when cycling or using a motorbike or moped.
- Ask about local sea currents and choose safe swimming areas.

Prevention of Insect Bites

Mosquitoes and other biting insects can be a nuisance but can also spread some serious diseases including malaria, yellow fever, Japanese encephalitis and dengue fever. There is a lot you can do to protect yourself.

- Covering the skin with light, loose clothing offers the best protection – wear long sleeves and long skirts or trousers instead of shorts.
- Use a reliable insect repellent (DEET based repellents are proven to be effective). Repellents are available for clothing and skin.
- Use plug-in insecticide vapourisers or if there is no electricity burn insecticide coils to help control insects.
- If staying in accommodation without air conditioning, sleep under a mosquito net impregnated with repellent. Smaller nets are available for cots.
- If you do get bitten and develop an allergic reaction (redness and swelling) anti-histamine ointments or tablets may help.

Travellers to malarious areas should seek expert advice on prevention of this disease.

Animal Bites

Rabies is present in many countries and is transmitted via the saliva of an infected animal, usually through a bite. Rabies is always fatal.

- Avoid contact with animals, both wild and domestic
- If you are travelling in rural areas of high risk countries away from medical care, then you should consider vaccination before you go.
- In a country where rabies is present, any bite or lick should be treated as possible exposure to rabies.
 - Wash out the area with lots of water, soap and detergent for around 5 minutes
 - Apply an antiseptic
 - Seek medical advice urgently