

TRAVEL & HEALTH



BASIC INFORMATION

Travel may consist of a short weekend trip or a journey of several months to foreign countries. It can bring great joy for many people, but can quickly turn into a nightmare if an unexpected illness or other health problem happens to you or a traveling companion. Chronic health problems, disabilities, or aging should not deter you from enjoying the benefits of travel. Preparation and prevention can help prevent some health problems and lessen the impact of others.

TIPS FOR PLANNING AHEAD FOR A HEALTHY TRIP

- Know the physical demands involved in making the trip. Prepare yourself as much as possible before you leave on the trip.
- Have a medical and dental check before you embark on a lengthy trip within the United States and before any foreign travel. Discuss the trip with your health care provider. Ask about possible changes in how or when you take any prescribed drugs. Have your health care provider write a letter stating why you are traveling with certain drugs or medical equipment (such as insulin and syringes). Get information about recommended and required immunizations for your destination.
- Carry a supply of your prescription drugs to last the entire trip. Don't pack the whole supply. Keep some on your person or carry them in a purse, camera bag, or briefcase. Always keep drugs in an original prescription container. This is particularly important in foreign travel. Carry a copy of the written prescription. This will help in buying drugs if needed, and sometimes, getting drug containers through customs in some countries.
- Take copies of specific medical records with you in case you need medical help. Ask your health care provider which ones would be appropriate.
- Check your medical insurance to see if it covers care outside the United States. If not, consider buying special travel insurance. Medicare will not cover medical expenses outside the United States.
- If traveling to a non-English speaking country, get the names of doctors available there who do speak English.
- Plan your schedule so that you will have time to recover from jet lag symptoms.
- Notify the airline about any special dietary needs you have.
- Follow all food and water safety guidelines for the areas you visit.
- Have a personal medical kit with you. Consider including aspirin and/or acetaminophen, antacid, antibiotic, antihistamine, decongestant, diarrhea medicine, mild laxative, motion sickness drug, antifungal and antibacterial ointments, 1% cortisone cream, sunscreen,

insect repellent, antiseptic sprays or ointments, cotton balls, tweezers, bandages, elastic bandage, alcohol-based hand wipes (or waterless gels or sprays), oral rehydration solution packets, safety pins, corn plasters, sanitary pads/tampons, and an extra pair of prescription eyeglasses (plus a written copy of the prescription). Consider things such as mild sedatives, antianxiety drugs, high-altitude preventive drugs, and water purification tablets.

- If you have a special health problem or allergy, wear or carry a medical-alert type information pendant or tag.

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The federal government has a variety of publications available about travel. Contact the Federal Citizen Information Center, P.O. Box 100, Pueblo, CO 81002; (888) 878-3256; website: www.pueblo.gsa.gov.
- Your local or state health department is a good source of information. If traveling within the United States, consider contacting the health department at your destination for specific information about that location.
- For a directory of English-speaking doctors in foreign countries, contact The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT), 417 Center St., Lewiston, NY, 14092; (716) 754-4883 (not toll-free); website: www.iamat.org.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) hotline (877) FYI-TRIP for recorded messages about travel. Visit the website: www.cdc.gov/travel for a variety of useful travel information. Get a copy of Health Information for International Travel. It is written for health care providers, but others may find it useful.
- International SOS Assistance provides international doctor referral and other services with varying fees. Eight Neshaminy Interplex, Suite 207, Trevoise, PA 19053; (800) 523-8930; website: www.internationalsos.com.
- Special travel insurance companies provide insurance as well as other medical help. Ask your travel agent for information or do a web search.
- Your credit card company may offer medical assistance for travelers. Check with them before your trip.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member wants copies of prescriptions or medical records or needs a physical before traveling.

Special notes:

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