

TRAVEL HEALTH USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel health

International travel has expanded significantly over the last number of years, leading to a more adventurous approach to leisure destinations.

Few areas of the world are not on someone's itinerary and travellers are more likely than ever before to visit destinations with health hazards they have not encountered before and with poorly developed health services.

Although few travellers run into serious medical problems it is worth paying a little attention to the health aspects of travel when planning a trip. This should help to prevent problems later on and to ensure that any that do arise will not be serious.

Risks can be minimised by seeking information about the country you are visiting, checking out facilities before you travel and being prepared for both minor and major medical emergencies.

Insurance

Being taken ill when abroad can be expensive especially outside the European union where healthcare is available to all EU citizens, so remember to apply for a European health insurance card (EHIC) remember even in EU, repatriation by air ambulance in the event of serious illness or accident is rarely involved in state healthcare. You should always take out travel insurance, which can be inexpensive before you leave, if you have a regular annual policy check that it is up to date and is valid for the entire travel period and for any activities that you may be undertaking such as skiing or water sports.

General Health

Food and water

If you have any doubts about the quality of tap water ensure that you drink, wash and clean your teeth with bottled water or water that has been boiled or sterilise. Where possible eat fresh food that has been thoroughly cooked, shellfish should never be eaten raw and avoid salad, fruit or ice cubes that you have not prepared yourself

Travellers' Diarrhoea

If you do get acute diarrhoea drink lots of fluids and avoid dehydration, you may wish to bring hydration drinks with you on holiday and you can buy these as sachets from your pharmacy and add them to water. You should eat as soon as you can.

Anti-diarrhoea medicines can be taken to relative symptoms of acute diarrhoea and these can be also bought at your pharmacy.

Alcohol

Be sensible with alcohol when abroad and avoid dehydration, drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and limit alcoholic drinks to reduce dehydration also remember cultural issues with alcohol and leaving yourself vulnerable when intoxicated in a foreign country.

Sun exposure

Avoid overexposure to the sun, sun-induced skin damage can be avoided by following a few simple precautions. Travellers, especially those with fair skin should avoid exposure to the hottest sun (from 11am-3pm) apply a high-protection factor (25+) sunscreen protecting against both UVA+UVB to exposed skin, and wear a wide brimmed hat and clothing for additional sun protection. There is no such thing as a healthy tan.

A traveller who is unauthorised to hot climates may experience heat exhaustion and even sunstroke, causing weakness, dizziness, nausea, muscle cramps and eventually unconsciousness. Rarely severe sunstroke may be fatal. Drinking plenty of non-alcoholic fluids limiting exposure to sun especially during the hottest part of the day and avoiding physical exertion until you are acclimatised to the hotter climate can usually prevent this condition.

Bites + insect repellent

Use insect repellent to avoid insect bites, wear light colours from dusk to dawn (high risk time for mosquito bites) as dark colours attract mosquitoes. Apply repellent on top of sun block/cream when both are being used. Travellers to malaria affected areas should take antimalarial tablets as prescribed and for the duration of course. Seek urgent medical advice if bitten by any unfamiliar wildlife or mammal.