

Guidance for Travelers: International Travel & Infectious Disease

Many diseases are just a plane ride away. Take care of yourself and others before, during, and after travel with these resources and information.

Before travel

Whether you are traveling outside the U.S. to visit friends and relatives, for vacation, or on business, don't let illness interfere with your activities. Contact your primary health care provider or a travel clinic as soon as you know you are traveling (preferably 4 to 6 weeks before you travel) to discuss your travel plans and allow time to obtain necessary vaccines and medications. Your provider will need to know your dates of travel, destination(s), how long you will travel, any previous health issues, as well as your reasons for travel.

Some clinics have availability for last-minute travelers, so you should still seek care even if your trip is coming up sooner or unexpected. Even if you are familiar with your destination, it is important to understand the current risks in order to be well prepared for the trip.

Travel medication

Travel medication can be expensive and may or may not be covered by insurance. There are several things you can do at the doctor's office, at the pharmacy, and at home to find more affordable travel medication. If you are worried about the cost of medication, talk to your doctor about advocating for medication coverage or finding a medication discount card. Ask the pharmacist if they can give you a generic version of the medication or if there are discount cards available, and call different pharmacies to ask how much the medicine will cost.

Vaccines, travel health clinics, and other recommendations

Your immunization, medication needs, and other specific travel advice are based on your travel destination. Vaccines can be expensive and are not always covered by insurance. Your primary health care provider may be able to administer vaccines for lower-risk trips, prioritize vaccines to minimize cost, and refer you to travel clinics if needed. Providers at travel clinics are trained and

certified to provide you with the needed health information for your specific destination, as well as administer the required vaccines and medication to keep you healthy throughout the trip. This includes trips to Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, and Central America.

During travel

There are several important water and food safety tips to remember while you are traveling. The general rule is "boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it."

- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer often, especially before eating.
- Avoid tap/well water. Drink water that has been boiled or bottled from a trusted source.
- Avoid locally-made ice cubes.
- Drink canned or bottled beverages in the original container.
- Avoid raw and undercooked food, especially meat, fish, and shellfish.
- Avoid raw fruits or vegetables, like fresh salads or fruit platters.
- Steaming hot food that has not been sitting out is usually safe to eat.

After travel

Contact your health care provider if:

- You do not feel well, especially if you have a fever or rash.
- You have diarrhea with passage of many stools.
- Your symptoms worsen or last more than a couple days (24 hours for children).

Symptoms may appear shortly after you return or months later. Always tell your health care provider if you have traveled outside the United States. This information will help them provide you with the best health care.