

This leaflet is designed to remind you of some of the information the nurse gave you when you visited for your travel appointment. **PLEASE READ IT!** The information will help you to stay healthy on your trip.

Useful websites for further information

www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

www.nathnac.org

www.fco.gov.uk/travel

www.immunisation.nhs.uk

www.malariahotspots.co.uk

Accidents

Accidents are the major leading causes of death in travellers abroad. These include road traffic accidents and swimming/water accidents.

Precautions include:

- Avoid alcohol before swimming
- Never dive into water where depth is uncertain
- Only swim in safe water, check currents and presence of jellyfish etc.
- Never drink alcohol and drive
- If hiring a car select larger well maintained vehicles, avoid motorcycles and mopeds
- Use reliable taxi firms and know where emergency facilities are

Swimming

It is safer to swim in water that is well chlorinated. If you are travelling to Africa, South America or some parts of the Caribbean, AVOID SWIMMING in fresh water LAKES and STREAMS. You can catch a parasitic disease called SCHISTOSOMIASIS from such places. This disease is also known as BILHARZIA. It is wise NEVER TO GO BAREFOOT, but to wear protective footwear when out, even on the beach. Other diseases can be caught from sand and soil, particularly wet soil.

Insurance cover

- Take out adequate insurance cover for your trip. This should possibly include medical repatriation, as without it, this service if needed is extremely expensive.
- If you have any pre existing medical conditions, make sure you inform the insurance company of these details and check the small print of the policy thoroughly.
- If you travel to a European Union country, make sure you have obtained an EHIC card before you travel. The EHIC application form is in the T7 leaflet from a post office, by ringing telephone 090

7707 8370 or applying online at www.ehicard.org
This takes time to obtain so needs to be applied for in advance. Additional travel insurance is still advised.

Food, water and personal hygiene

Diseases such as Hepatitis A can be caught through drinking or swimming in contaminated water. Unless you know the water supply is safe then you should only use; bottled water, boiled or sterilised water. This includes water used for brushing your teeth or as ice cubes in drinks.

Personal hygiene, such as hand washing after visiting the toilet and before eating or preparing foods can reduce the risks of the diseases that are spread in this way. Contaminated food is the **most common** source of many diseases abroad.

By following the guidelines below you can help prevent some of these diseases.

- Only eat well cooked fresh food
- Avoid leftovers and reheated food
- Eat cooked vegetables and avoid salads
- Ensure meat is thoroughly cooked
- Only eat fruit you can peel
- Never drink unpasteurised milk
- Avoid ice-cream
- Avoid shellfish, it is a high risk food
- As a general rule, avoid buying from street vendors

Travellers diarrhoea

This is the **most common illness** that you will be exposed to abroad and there is **no vaccine against it!** Travellers' diarrhoea is caused by eating and/or drinking food and water contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites. Risk of illness is higher in some countries than others.

High-risk areas include North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, S.E. Asia, South America, Mexico and the Middle East.

Medium risk areas include the northern Mediterranean, Canary Islands and the Caribbean Islands.

Low risk areas include North America, Western Europe and Australia

Rehydration is the first thing you should do if you develop travellers' diarrhoea abroad. Medication can be taken to stop the diarrhoea **BUT** should **NEVER** be taken if you have a fever or blood in the stool. Caution should be taken in using medication in children and medical advice should be sought. Women taking the contraceptive pill may not be adequately covered if she suffers from diarrhoea and advice within the pill packet should be followed.

Animal Bites

Rabies is present in many parts of the world and if a person develops rabies death is almost certain.

There are 3 main rules regarding rabies:

1. **Do not** touch any animals, even cats and dogs
2. If you are licked on an open wound, scratched or bitten by an animal in a country with rabies; wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for 5 mins at least, applying antiseptic solution if possible
3. Seek medical advice immediately, even if previously vaccinated against rabies.

Bite prevention

Mosquitos, certain types of flies, ticks and bugs can cause many different diseases, these include; malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever. Avoid being bitten by:

- Applying insect repellants on exposed skin. A content of up to 50% DEET is recommended for tropical destinations (check suitability for children on individual products).
- Spray your clothes with repellants
- If room is not air conditioned but screened off, close shutters in the evening and spray room with insecticide. In malarious areas, if camping or sleeping in unprotected accommodation; always sleep under a mosquito net impregnated with permethrin. Avoid camping near areas of stagnant water.

Electric buzzers, garlic and vitamin B12, yeast extract etc are ineffective for bite prevention.

Malaria

Malaria is one of the most serious diseases that travellers will be exposed to when visiting tropical countries. Malaria is an infection from a parasite which occurs following a bite from an infected mosquito. There are four different types of malaria; the most serious can kill within 24 hours of developing symptoms of malaria. More information on malaria is available from your nurse, as well as discussing available malaria tablets.

It is essential you prevent malaria by:

- A. = Awareness – being aware of whether malaria is present at your destination and how severe the risk is.
- B. = Bite prevention – taking all precautions to minimise your chances of being bitten
- C. = Chemoprophylaxis – making sure you take and complete the correct course of tablets.

- D. = Diagnosis and prompt treatment – knowing some of the symptoms of malaria; flu like illness, sometimes also with cough and diarrhoea. If you develop these symptoms especially within the first three months of travel but up to a year after return, you must go to your doctor immediately, telling them you have been abroad.

Safe sun advice

Although sunbathing may be enjoyable and a suntan a status symbol, it must be remembered that excessive sun exposure is a health hazard due to the effect of ultraviolet (UV) radiation on the skin. Sunburn and heat stroke cause serious problems in travellers.

Precautions:

- Avoid going out between 11am-3pm, when sun rays are strongest
- Wear protective clothing, especially those fair skinned and red hair. Children should wear long sleeved, loose fitting shirts and hats. Babies under 9 months should be kept out of direct sunlight
- Use an appropriate sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or above
- Drink plenty of fluids, be aware alcohol can make you dehydrated.

Air travel

On long haul flights it is sensible to:

- Exercise your legs, feet and toes while sitting. Upper body breathing exercises can further improve circulation
- Drink plenty of fluids.

Diseases through blood and body fluids

Diseases such as Hepatitis B and HIV can be very serious and can be transmitted by medical procedures using unclean equipment, sharing of needles, and unprotected casual sex and inadequately screened blood products.

Protect yourself by;

- Taking a sterile medical kit if travelling to poor resource country
- Avoiding ear/body piercing, tattooing etc
- Avoiding sharing of needles
- Avoiding casual sex, especially without using condom
- Avoid blood transfusion unless absolutely essential.