

HEALTH CARE TRAVEL HINTS

The stress and excitement of travel can make you more likely to get sick, but if you follow a few simple tips, you're more likely to stay healthy throughout your trip — and your trip will definitely be more enjoyable.

Traveling locally or abroad?

- Carry hand sanitizer, travel wipes and tissues to keep germs at a minimum
- For long car or plane trips be sure to make frequent stops to prevent formation of clots in the legs,
- Continue to drink lots of water

How do you know where to go when you need medical care away from home?

- For minor injuries try *hospital* based community emergency centers
- Most travel guides suggest you go to a hospital where English is spoken or U.S.-trained doctors can be found.
- It's a good idea keep with you during the trip written copy of your medical history with you. You can get an example medical history form at www.stlukesemergency.com
- If you have a serious or chronic medical condition, ask your physician give you the name of a physician in the area that you will be visiting.

Travel First Aid Kits

- Make sure to be prepared with a well-stocked first aid kit when you travel. You may need to treat an allergy or need a supply that you cannot find easily on the road. For a list of suggested travel first aid supplies visit our web site at www.stlukesemergency.com
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Traveling International

Learn Potential Health Risks Before Leaving Home. A website managed by the [U.S. Department of Health Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(www.cdc.gov/travel\)](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) contains some of the **most up-to-date information** about diseases, epidemics and other health news in countries around the world. Click on the region of the world that you are going to visit and you'll find a wealth of health-related information, including which vaccinations you must have or are recommended, an update on diseases in the region, and tips for staying healthy while you are traveling.

Do You Need Vaccinations before traveling outside the US?

The first thing you should do if you're heading overseas is to find out what kinds of vaccinations you'll need in advance because different countries have different requirements. In the United States, contact your doctor or the Centers for Disease Control

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and Prevention (CDC) for a list of necessary vaccinations. *You'll want to allow plenty of time for this step in case you need to get vaccines that require more than one dose.*

Finding a Good Doctor When Traveling Abroad

You never know when you'll need a doctor while traveling. Savvy travelers heading outside the U.S. take a list of travel medical clinics in the region they are visiting that are members of international organizations whose members may require some vetting. The [International Society of Travel Medicine](#) has information about clinics in nearly 50 countries around the world. The [American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene](#) also has a list of clinics.

[More Info](#)

Get Healthcare Insurance for Adventurous Trips

Travelers going to remote locations or exotic countries should consider a travel insurance policy with a strong healthcare component. If you break a leg while hiking in the Andes and must be airlifted out, for example, some policies will cover the cost. For an additional fee, some policies reimburse you when you send in the bills then contact your healthcare insurance company for their reimbursement.

Common Travel Troubles

Three of the most common health problems that you may experience when traveling are jet lag, altitude sickness, and diarrhea. When you fly across time zones, the differing amounts of light can change your internal body clock, resulting in a condition known as jet lag. Jet lag may cause some symptoms that are bummers on a fun trip, including upset stomach, insomnia, and tiredness.

There are some things you can do to combat jet lag; for example, if you're traveling from west to east, you should stay out of the sun until the day after your arrival. If you're flying from east to west, go for a brisk walk as soon as possible after you arrive.

Altitude sickness is caused by dry air, a decrease in oxygen, and low barometric pressure when you travel to a higher altitude than you're used to. As a result, you may have problems, such as headaches, dehydration, and shortness of breath. Some people are affected at 5,000 feet (1,524 meters), but others aren't affected until they reach altitudes of 10,000 feet (3,048 meters) or more. Find out what altitude you're traveling to before you go to see if altitude sickness could be a problem.

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The best prevention for altitude sickness is to gradually increase your altitude every day to get used to it. If that isn't possible, a drug known as acetazolamide can help relieve and even prevent symptoms of altitude sickness. If you think that you might get altitude sickness, talk with your doctor before you leave home.

The topic of diarrhea may seem gross, but it can be a serious problem. Traveler's diarrhea, known as turista, often occurs when a foreign type of bacteria enters your digestive tract, usually when you eat contaminated food or water. The best way to prevent turista is to be very careful of the food you eat and the water you drink on the road.

Safe Eats and Drinks

So what foods are safe to eat? Any foods that have been boiled are generally safe, as well as fruits and vegetables that have to be peeled before eating. Avoid eating uncooked or undercooked meat or meat that is not cooked just prior to serving or foods that require a lot of handling before serving.

One of your favorite foods at home is on the safe list on the road — pizza! Pizza dough, sauce, and cheese are foods that are less likely to spoil than others, and the high heat of a pizza oven tends to kill any harmful bacteria in the food.

You've probably heard that you shouldn't drink the water in some countries overseas, but did you know why? Water supplies in many developing countries are not treated in the same way as water supplies in developed countries; various bacteria, viruses, and parasites are commonly found in the water. Many experts suggest you drink only bottled water when traveling. If you need to use tap water, you should boil it first, purify it with an iodine tablet or sterilize with a portable purifier. Even if you're brushing your teeth, rinsing contact lenses, drinking a small glass of water to wash down pills, or adding ice to your drink, first take precautions to ensure the water is safe.