



Safe Travel

Helpful tips

This handout gives helpful tips on how to stay safe and healthy while you are traveling. Included are a list of medicines to take with you, and what to include in your “traveler’s medical kit.”

Stay Safe

Travel Schedule

- Always carry an updated travel schedule with you or be able to access it by email.

Medicines

- Keep prescribed medicines and a basic medical kit with you.
- Carry medicines in your carry-on, not your checked luggage.
- Keep all medicines in the containers they came in from the pharmacy.

Passport

- Before leaving on your trip, make 2 copies of your passport. Carry 1 copy with you on the trip and leave 1 copy at home with a relative or friend. Consider emailing a copy of your passport to your own secure email address.
- When you travel, keep your passport in a safe place, such as a security pocket or a belt that you wear under your clothes.

Credit Cards

- Leave a copy of your credit card numbers and card cancellation phone numbers at home with a relative or friend. Consider emailing this information to your own secure email address.
- If your credit cards are lost, cancel them right away.
- Before leaving on your trip, call your credit card company and tell them that you will be traveling out of the country. They may not allow charges unless you have told them you will be using your card for international travel.

UW Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER

Accidents

The most common cause of death among travelers is not disease. Most deaths that occur when people are away from home are caused by motor vehicle accidents. Drowning is the second most common cause of death. Alcohol use is often involved in these deaths.

To avoid accidents while traveling:

- Look both ways before you cross a street. Be aware of pedestrian safety hazards such as different traffic laws or driving on the left side of the road.
- When riding in a vehicle, wear seat and shoulder belts when possible.
- Avoid riding motorcycles or scooters. If you do, wear a helmet.
- If you plan on riding a bicycle, take and wear a helmet.
- Do not ride on the roof of a bus or in the back of an open truck.
- Avoid over-crowded public vehicles.
- Avoid traveling on country roads after dark.
- Swim only in safe swimming areas, such as pools and supervised swimming beaches. Ask local residents about tides and currents before you swim in the ocean.
- Be aware of the effects of alcohol on your judgment. Set limits on how much alcohol you drink.
- Whenever possible, find places to stay that have smoke detectors and sprinkler systems. Plan an escape route from your room so that you are prepared in case of fire.

Other Safety Tips

- Lock your car doors.
- Carry extra food and water.
- Buy medical evacuation insurance.
- Carry a “traveler’s medical kit” (see pages 7 and 8).
- Know where you can get medical help in the areas where you will be traveling.
- Practice safe sex.

Stay Healthy

- **Update your immunizations.** Update both routine immunizations, such as tetanus and flu, and travel-specific vaccines, such as typhoid.

- **Protect yourself from the sun.** Use sunscreen with a minimum SPF (*sun-protection factor*) 30. Reapply it often. Wear sunglasses and a hat when you are outside.
- **Wash your hands often.** Make sure you wash them before eating and after using the bathroom. Take a supply of hand wipes or an alcohol-based hand cleaner with you, in case clean water and soap are not available.

Drinking Water

Tap water is safe to drink in western European countries, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Tap water from all other countries is usually considered unsafe.

Safe Water sources

- Bottled water with an unbroken seal
- Boiled water
- Water treated with a filter (pore size of 1 micron or less), Steri-pen, or iodine/chlorine tablets or drops

Please read detailed information regarding each water treatment. In some cases, we suggest using 2 forms of treatment to ensure safety.

- Carbonated drinks (soda pop, beer)

Unsafe Water Sources

- Tap water
- Ice made from tap water

Food: Boil It, Cook It, Peel It, or Forget It

- Food that is **well cooked** (with heat) and **served very hot** is usually safe to eat.
- **Meat, poultry, and seafood** should be **well cooked**. Do **not** eat these foods raw or rare.
- **Avoid salads** and all **leafy greens** in tropical and developing countries.
- **Thick-skinned fruits that you peel yourself** are usually safe to eat. This includes bananas, oranges, mangos, papayas, and avocados. Avoid fresh fruit salads prepared by others.
- Drink **pasteurized milk**, and eat yogurt, cheese, and other dairy products that are made from pasteurized milk.

Keep the Bugs Away

Skin

- Use an insect repellent with DEET (20% to 35%). Look for a long-acting brand such as Sawyers or Ultrathon. DEET products last about 6 to 8 hours after they are applied. If you use DEET during the day, apply sunscreen first, let it absorb, then apply the DEET.
- Picaridin 20% is another insect repellent that works very well.
- Other products that repel insects are soybean oil, oil of eucalyptus, and citronella. But, these are only effective for a very brief duration after they are applied. We do not recommend these products in areas where you might be at risk for getting malaria, yellow fever, or dengue.

Clothes and Mosquito Nets

Apply permethrin spray or solution to your clothing, boots, shoes, socks, hats, and mosquito nets. Think about wearing light-colored clothing, such as tan or khaki. These colors are less attractive to bugs.

Preventing Malaria

Take your malaria pills if they are advised for your travel destination. But, pills do not fully protect you from malaria. You must also avoid getting mosquito bites (see above).

If You Get Sick

Emergency Care

Seek medical care **right away** if you have:

- An animal bite
- A severe headache
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Bloody diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- A skin wound that is not healing

Diarrhea

- Take medicines for “traveler’s diarrhea” if you have moderate to severe watery diarrhea.
- Do not give Imodium A-D to children.
- If your travel provider prescribed antibiotics (such as azithromycin or ciprofloxacin) to treat diarrhea, take them only until your symptoms go away, not longer.

If you have:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mild diarrhea | Take Imodium A-D only (available over the counter) |
| Watery diarrhea | Take Imodium A-D and an antibiotic |
| Any of these symptoms: | |
| - Blood in your stool | |
| - A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C) | |
| - Severe abdominal pain | |
| See a doctor , do NOT take Imodium A-D | |

Jet Lag

Jet lag is common among travelers who cross 3 or more time zones. It can be eased by rescheduling your activities (“staying up” in your new time zone) or using sleep aids such as:

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl), available over the counter
- Ambien (zolpidem), available by prescription only

Be Prepared

- Carry a small flashlight, hand wipes or hand sanitizer, and toilet paper with you.
- Prepare a traveler’s medical kit (see pages 7 and 8).
- Check that your health insurance covers you while you are traveling. Buy medical evacuation insurance and learn how to use it while traveling if you have a medical emergency, such as an animal bite, car accident, other injury, or illness.

When You Buy Local Goods

Pottery

Foods and beverages in some ceramic containers may contain toxic metals. Long-term, regular use of these containers for food or beverages can make you ill.

Countries that do not restrict how much lead and other harmful materials are used in their ceramics include Mexico, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Hong Kong, India, North Korea, and China.

Leather Goods

We also advise not buying items made from animal hide. Leather may be contaminated with the bacteria that cause anthrax.

Heat Illness

High temperatures can be harmful if you are not used to them. Too much heat can cause illnesses that range from mild to life-threatening.

Follow these tips to prevent heat illness:

- Avoid heavy exercise during the hottest part of the day.
- Limit exercise to 30 to 90 minutes a day during your first week in the hot location.
- Rest often.
- Wet your skin with water, using a spray bottle or a sponge.
- Wear lightweight, loose, light-colored clothing and a hat.
- Drink plenty of water. This is **very** important if you are exercising.
- Do not wait until you feel thirsty to drink fluids. Drink throughout the day.
- Use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.

Medicines for Travel

You may want to consider taking these medicines and other medical supplies with you when you travel:

For Allergic Reactions

- Benadryl (diphenhydramine)
- EpiPen (*epinephrine autoinjector*) if you have severe allergies

For Altitude Sickness

- Diamox (acetazolamide)

For Diarrhea

- Zithromax (azithromycin) 250 mg
- Cipro (ciproflaxin) 500 mg
- Imodium A-D (loperamide)

To Protect Against Insect Bites

- DEET lotion (20 to 35%)

For Jet Lag

- Ambien (zolpidem)
- Over-the-counter sleep aid such as Tylenol PM

To Fight Malaria

- Plaquenil (hydroxychloroquine) 400 mg (weekly)
- Doxycycline 100 mg (daily)
- Larium (mefloquine) 250 mg (weekly)
- Malarone (atovaquone/proguanil) (daily)

To Prevent Motion Sickness

- Transderm Scop (scopolamine patch)
- Dramamine or Bonine (both available without a prescription)

For Skin Infections

- Keflex (cephalexin) 500 mg
- Bactroban (mupirocin ointment)

To Prevent Typhoid

- Typhoid vaccine – oral

To Fight a Vaginal Yeast Infection

- Over-the-counter vaginal antifungal cream (miconazole) – 3-day
- Diflucan (fluconazole) 150 mg

Traveler's Medical Kit

- First aid supplies:
 - Gauze
 - Tape
 - Band-aids
 - Moleskin
 - Tweezers
 - Antiseptic towelettes (hand wipes)
 - Antibiotic ointment such as Bacitracin
 - Ace bandage
 - Steri-Strips
 - Small scissors

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Travel Services/Family Medical Center

Phone: 206-598-4055

Fax: 206-598-5720

- Extra eyeglasses and your written eyeglass prescription, contact lens solutions, and other eye-care supplies
- Sunglasses
- Soap
- Thermometer (not glass)
- Sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher
- Insect repellent
- Mosquito net
- Water purification system (iodine or filter, see page 3)
- Foot powder (Micatin, Tinactin, Desenex)
- Analgesic (pain medicine) such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Antiseptic such as betadine
- Antimalarial medicine
- Constipation treatment (Metamucil, docusate sodium, Senekot)
- Diarrhea treatment such as Imodium A-D
- Antibiotics for diarrhea or to treat other infections
- Motion sickness medicine such as Dramamine or Bonine (Meclizine)
- Antihistamine such as Benadryl
- Altitude sickness prevention medicine (if needed)
- Antacids
- Throat lozenges
- Condoms
- Dental floss
- Pocket knife (packed in your checked luggage)
- Hydrocortisone 1% cream for rashes
- EpiPen (epinephrine autoinjector) if you have severe allergies
- For women:* feminine hygiene items (tampons, yeast infection cream)

UW Medicine

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER

**Travel Services/
Family Medical Center**

Box 354770

1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195
206-598-4055