

Health FAQs

From the CDC (Center for Disease Control):

Q. How soon before I travel should I make an appointment with the doctor? _____

A. Ideally, set up an appointment with a health-care provider 4 to 6 weeks before your trip. Many vaccines take time to become effective, and some vaccines must be given in a series over a period of days or sometimes weeks. If it is less than 4 weeks before you leave, you should still see your doctor. It might not be too late to get your shots or medications and other information about how to protect yourself from illness and injury while traveling.

Q. What items do you suggest I bring on my trip to help me stay healthy or treat illnesses like diarrhea? _____

A. We suggest you put together a Travelers' Health Kit. You should pack your prescribed medications, including an antibiotic to self-treat moderate to severe diarrhea. In addition, bring an over-the-counter medication to prevent diarrhea, sunscreen, insect repellent, and alcohol-based hand gels containing at least 60% alcohol to wash your hands when soap and clean water are not readily available. See our full list of suggested items in Travelers' Health Kit. A variety of kits are also available commercially.

Q. What should I look for in choosing an insect repellent? _____

A. The most effective repellents contain DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide) as an active ingredient. DEET has a long history of effectiveness and safety when used according to directions. A new repellent is now available in the U.S. containing 7% and 15% concentrations of picaridin (KBR 3023) as an active ingredient, which may be used if a DEET-containing repellent is not acceptable to the user. Because the percentage of picaridin is low, this repellent needs more frequent application. For more information about insect repellent use, see Protection against Mosquitoes and Other Arthropods.

Currently, the use of repellents other than DEET is not recommended for protection against mosquitoes that cause malaria, because there is less information available on how effective these repellents are against all types of mosquitoes that can transmit malaria.

Check the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at www.epa.gov to learn about insect repellents that have been EPA-approved for efficacy and human safety; see *How to Use Insect Repellents Safely*.

Q. Is handwashing important during travel? _____

A. Yes. One of the most important ways to reduce infectious disease transmission during travel is to wash your hands carefully and frequently. Soap and water will help remove potentially infectious materials from your hands. If soap and water are not available, and your hands are not visibly dirty, use a waterless, alcohol-based hand gel with at least 60% alcohol. See these websites for information about effective handwashing: Handwashing Tips (PDF document) and Hand Hygiene After a Disaster.

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Q. Where can I find information about travel health insurance and medical evacuation? _____

A. The U.S. Department of State lists travel health insurance and medical evacuation companies on their website, see *Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad*. For additional information, see *Seeking Healthcare Abroad*.

Q. Where can I find information about airport security and the items I am not allowed to carry onto an airplane? _____

A. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has in-depth information for travelers about security awareness, prohibited items, and travel tips. See *Welcome to the TSA's Travel Assistant*.

Q. What are the new requirements for traveling to the Caribbean, Bermuda, Panama, Mexico, and Canada? _____

A. Beginning January 23, 2007, ALL persons, including U.S. citizens, traveling by air between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda will be required to present a valid passport, Air NEXUS card, or U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Document, or an Alien Registration Card, Form I-551, if applicable. See the U.S. Department of State site for details.

Q. While I am abroad, is there any way I can be contacted about an emergency that might affect me, or have my next of kin notified about my safety? _____

A. Several airlines have registration processes that allow travelers to provide their contact information, emergency contact/next-of-kin information, and travel itinerary information in case of an emergency. Please contact your airline for specific information about its emergency contact forms and procedures. Additionally, the U.S. State Department provides a free travel registration service to U.S. citizens who are traveling or living in another country. Registration allows a traveler to record information about his or her upcoming trip abroad that the Department of State can use to assist in case of an emergency. Americans residing abroad can also get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. For more information, see the U.S. Department of State's Travel Registration site.



Where roots run deep, relationships grow strong.