

Travel Advice Leaflet

Berwyn House Surgery

This leaflet is designed to remind you of some of the information the Practice Nurse gave you during your travel health risk assessment appointment: it will help you to stay healthy on your trip so PLEASE READ IT!

Water:

Diseases can be caught by drinking contaminated water, or swimming in it. ONLY USE

- Boiled water
- Bottled water (check seals are intact)
- Water treated by a sterilisation agent

This includes ICE CUBES and CLEANING YOUR TEETH

Swimming:

It is safer to swim in water that is well chlorinated. If travelling to Africa, South America or some parts of the Caribbean, AVOID SWIMMING in fresh water lakes and streams, as you can catch parasitic diseases. NEVER GO BAREFOOT, but wear protective footwear even on beaches. Diseases can be caught from sand and soil.

Food:

Contaminated food is the commonest source of many diseases abroad. You can help prevent it by following these guidelines:

- Only eat well cooked fresh food
- Avoid leftovers/ reheated foods
- Ensure meat is well cooked
- Eat cooked vegetables and avoid salads
- Only eat fruit you can peel
- Never drink unpasteurised milk
- Avoid ice-cream and shellfish
- Avoid buying food from street vendor's stalls

Travellers Diarrhoea:

This is the most common illness that you will be exposed to abroad: it is caused by eating/drinking food and water contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites.

- **High risk areas** include North Africa, sub-Saharan, Indian Subcontinent, SE Asia, South America, Mexico and the Middle East
- **Medium risk areas** include northern Mediterranean, Canary Islands and the Caribbean
- **Low risk areas** include North America, Western Europe and Australia

Treatment is **rehydration** (e.g. *dioralyte*- discuss with your pharmacist)

Anti-diarrhoeal tablets (e.g. *Imodim*- discuss with your pharmacist) can be used for adults (and children over 4 years with consultation with a doctor). This MUST NOT be taken if the person has a temperature or blood in the stool.

Contact Medical Help if the affected person has:

- A temperature
- Blood in the diarrhoea
- Diarrhoea for more than 48 hours (24 hours in children)
- Becomes confused

Air Travel:

- Be comfortable in your seat
- Exercise your legs, feet and toes while sitting every 1/2hour
- Take short walks if possible
- Drink plenty of water/ avoid alcohol as this dehydrates

Sun and Heat:

Sunburn and heat-stroke cause serious problems in travellers, but in the long term can cause skin cancer.

Precautionary guidelines:

- Increase sun exposure gradually
- Use sun blocks of appropriate strength
- Wear protective clothing- hats/ sunglasses/ T-shirts
- Avoid 11am- 3pm when the sun's rays are strongest
- Take special care of children and those with pale skin/ red hair
- Drink extra fluids in a hot climate (alcohol dehydrates)

Hepatitis B and HIV:

Diseases transmitted by blood/ sexual contact. Ways to protect yourself:

- Only accept a blood transfusion when essential
- If travelling to a developing country, take a sterile **medical kit**
- Avoid procedures- ear/ body piercing, acupuncture, tattooing
- Avoid casual, unprotected sex (take condoms if required)

Insect bites/ malaria:

Mosquitoes, some flies, ticks and bugs can cause disease such as malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, encephalitis. Some bite at night (malaria infected mosquitoes bite from **dusk to dawn**), but some bite during daytime (e.g. yellow fever infected mosquitoes).

Primary Prevention = AVOIDING BEING BITTEN.

- Cover up skin as much as possible. Wear light coloured, loose fitting clothes/ long sleeves/ trousers/ long skirts
- Use insect repellents on exposed skin containing **DEET** 50% (suitable for all individuals over 2 months unless allergic)
- Spray clothing with insect repellent
- Spray the room before dusk with a knockdown insecticide/ close shutters. In malarious areas use an impregnated mosquito net
- Electric insecticide vaporisers are very effective
- Air conditioning reduces the likelihood of mosquitoes and ceiling fans reduce mosquito nuisance

(There is NO evidence that buzzers, vitamin B, garlic or tea-tree oil act as an effective mosquito repellent)

The **A,B,C,D** of **malaria prevention:**

- **A**wareness of risk - a summary description of the malaria risk for that country.
- **B**ite prevention - practical measures to take to avoid mosquito bites.
- **C**hemoprophylaxis - country specific chemoprophylaxis advice.
- **D**iagnosis and treatment - information on the signs and symptoms of malaria and the importance of prompt treatment.

Animal bites:

Rabies is present in many parts of the world. If a person develops rabies, death is 100% certain. There are 3 rules:

- **DO NOT TOUCH any animal** (even cats/ dogs)
- If you are licked on broken skin or bitten in a country which has rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for 5 minutes
- Seek medical advice **IMMEDIATELY**, even if you have been previously immunised

Accidents:

Take out adequate travel insurance cover for your trip. This should possibly include medical repatriation

If travelling to Europe ensure you have a valid EHIC

Precautionary guidelines:

- Avoid alcohol and food before swimming
- Never dive into water where the depth is uncertain
- Only swim in safe water (check currents/ depth/ sharks/ jelly fish etc)
- Avoid alcohol when driving
- Avoid hiring mopeds
- If hiring a car, rent from a reliable firm and check tyres/ breaks/ seat belts etc
- Use reliable taxi firms

Interesting web site addresses:

Department of Health- www.dh.gov.uk

Health Protection Agency- www.hpa.org.uk

National Travel Health Network and Centre- www.nathnac.org

Malaria advice for the general public- www.malariahotspots.co.uk

Immunisation issues- www.immunisation.nhs.uk

Foreign and Commonwealth Office- www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo

Cancer Research UK's SunSmart- www.sunsmart.org.uk