

Travel: Plan to Come Back Safe & Free of Potential Risks



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- 1- The pre-travel phase,
- 2- During the trip phase, and
- 3- The post-travel phase.



When safety is entertained in relation to travelling, it clearly covers, first the safety of your personal health, second the safety of your personal physical existence, and third the safety of your personal belongings. This safety business should extend to shield also the close companions of your trip^{1,2}.

Many medical, governmental, civil, and/or social authorities have issued at least one printed form that includes either recommendations, or guidelines, or protocols, or tips for safe travel. Some authorities do oblige the traveler to fulfill certain items of these "Recommendations" to grant her/him the permission to travel to her/his planned destination².

In order to avoid repetition, what I am going to do in this article is to highlight on the important items that are of practical importance for enjoying the trip with maximum possible level of safety and minimal possible level of potential risks.

A pre-travel triad of Assessment-Education-Advice is a very precious process. The key element of the pretravel physician's visit is a health risk assessment. After completion of a risk assessment, Individuals should receive travel education and advice.

No matter whom you are ,
No matter to where you are going ,
No matter what is your transportation ,
No matter which travel agency , and
No matter who is travelling with you ,



Your primary concern should be to fulfill the aim of your trip, enjoy the process, and secure your safety and the safety of your companions from the moment you plan for the trip and a long time after your return¹.

In order to be capable of ensuring the above obligations, you should follow the regulations which clearly indicates that a totally safe trip project starts with proper arrangements done in three major steps :



All travelers should receive education about risk avoidance; topics include vaccine-preventable illnesses, avoidance of insects, malaria chemoprophylaxis, prevention and self-treatment of traveler's diarrhea, personal safety, travel and evacuation insurance, and access to medical care during travel. Further education should be tailored to the traveler and itinerary^{1,2}.

One of the most common and bothersome problems that can inflict the traveler and disrupt her/his schedule is, what usually is labeled as "Traveler's diarrhea".

"Traveler's diarrhea" is well known by people who travel and who has experienced a form of this illness. This illness is usually precipitated by exposure to infectious organism present in the food/fluid items we do consume in our journey. To minimize the risk of contracting this illness, travelers should try to eat at restaurants that have a reputation for food safety. Fruits and vegetables peeled by the traveler, dry foods, and foods that are piping hot and thoroughly cooked are generally safe for travelers. The following should be avoided: tap water, ice cubes, fruit juice, fresh salads, unpasteurized dairy products, cold sauces and toppings, open buffets, and undercooked or reheated foods.^{1,2,3,4,5}

There is no vaccine for general traveler's diarrhea. Routine chemoprophylaxis for traveler's diarrhea is not recommended; however, it may be considered in healthy travelers for whom wellness is critical (e.g., some athletes) and in travelers at increased risk of severe illness or complications.

When chemoprophylaxis is initiated, fluoro-quinolone antibiotics are considered as first-line agents, and the regimen should be limited to two to three weeks^{1,2,3,4,5}.

When you travel abroad, the odds are you will have a safe and incident-free trip. Travelers can, however, become

victims of crime and violence, or experience unexpected difficulties⁴.

To minimize the risks of incidents, try to remember the followings:

- 1- Avoid using short cuts, poorly lit streets, or narrow alleys.
- 2- If possible, Try not to travel alone at night.
- 3- Stay away of public demonstrations and other disturbances.
- 4- Maintain a low profile and minimize loud conversations or arguments.
- 5- Never discuss travel plans or other personal matter with strangers.
- 6- Watch scam artists by being wary of strangers who approach you and offer to be your guide or sell you something at bargain prices.
- 7- Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will:
 - a- Jostle you,
 - b- Ask you for directions or the time,
 - c- Point to something spilled on your clothing,
 - d- Or distract you by creating a disturbance.
- 8- Beware of groups of vagrant children who could create a distraction to pick your pocket.
- 9- Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.
- 10- Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. Try to ask for directions only from individuals in authority.
- 11- Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.
- 12- Learn a few phrases in the local language or have them handy in written form so that you can signal your need for police or medical help.
- 13- Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest embassy or consulate of your country.
- 14- If you are confronted, don't fight back - give up your valuables.



Every traveler should update her/his vaccinations. The two forms of vaccination:

- 1- The general form of vaccination recommended for every individual by the international authorities, and
- 2- The form of vaccination specifically required for visiting specific countries or regions.

Vaccination update is a must for personal safety of every individual. Vaccinations will help us to avoid contracting specific illnesses or minimize the consequences of these illnesses when unavoidably contracted, especially that sometimes, these illnesses can be fatal to human beings, like yellow fever, cholera, typhoid fever, etc ...^{1,2,3,4,5.}



Handling money improperly, can easily jeopardize your personal safety and the safety of your close companions.

In order to minimize the risks:^{4.}

- 1- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- 2- Change your travelers' checks only as you need currency.
- 3- Countersign travelers' checks only in front of the person who will cash them.
- 4- Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill.
- 5- Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.
- 6- Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money, buy airline tickets or purchase souvenirs.



- 7- Do not change money on the black market.

Travel Health Kit:

A basic travel health kit is important no matter where you travel. First aid supplies and medication may not always be readily available in other countries or may be different from those available in your country.

A good travel health kit contains enough supplies to prevent illness, handle minor injuries and illnesses, and manage pre-existing medical conditions for more than the duration of your trip.

Travel with a health kit so that first aid supplies and medications will be easy to find in an emergency.^{6, 7, 8, and 9.}



A very good question imposes itself: What to pack in your travel health kit???

1- Basic first aid items

It is essential to know how and when to use the first aid supplies in your kit.

- a- 0.5% hydrocortisone cream to treat minor skin irritation, like itching caused insect bites.
- b- Adhesive bandages (multiple sizes) and adhesive tape.
- c- Antibacterial and antifungal spray or cream to apply to wounds to prevent infection.
- d- Antibacterial hand sanitizer.
- e- Antiseptic wipes (for example, alcohol or iodine pads) to clean wounds.
- f- Disposable latex or vinyl gloves.
- g- First aid quick reference card.
- h- Gauze.
- i- Packets of oral rehydration salts to treat dehydration caused by diarrhea.
- j- Scissors for cutting tape, bandages, and so on...
- k- Tensor bandage for sprains.
- l- Thermometer.
- m- Tweezers for removing ticks, splinters, and so on...

2- Medications

Discuss the use of medications with your health care pro-

vider before departure and follow the directions for use carefully, including dosage and when to seek medical care. Bring more than enough medication to last your entire trip.

3- Other items

You may decide to include these items depending on your personal preference, destination, and activities:

- a- Sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) .
- b- Insect repellent containing DEET .
- c- Ear plugs for reducing noise to improve sleep and preventing swimmer's ear.
- d- extra pair of, or prescription for glasses or contacts etc...

It is always of great benefit to secure the following items in your hand bag, pocket wallet, or with your own personal belongings, but make sure that they are easily accessible. These items provide you with quick professional help when needed.

They should include at least the following:

1- Contact card

Carry a card with information to be used in case of a medical emergency, which clearly reveals any allergy, any medical condition, and the name of more than one person with telephone numbers to be contacted.

2- Proof of your insurance coverage

Always carry proof of your health insurance coverage when travelling.

3- Immunization record

Carry always a copy of your immunization record.

4- Prescription of your medications

When bringing prescription medication with you into another country, remember to:

- Bring a note from your health care provider explaining what the medication is for.
- Bring a copy of your original prescription with both the generic and trade names.

If you need to use needles or syringes, be aware of airline security restrictions.

As noted after reading the above summary of a huge subject that has tackled selected travel issue items of a wide field of specialty in medicine:

- Pre-travel preparations are the main issue for a safe trip.
- Traveling to familiar or unfamiliar destinations can bring to you the sort of troubles you do not want to experience on a trip.
- The pre-travel triad of Assessment-Education-Advice is the gold standard for minimizing the potential risks of

your journey.

Wish you all safe trips and happy endings.

WORLD TRAVEL SAFETY



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