TRAVEL HEALTH

In preparation for a trip, you may spend hours researching good deals with airline tickets, finding conveniently located hotels and mapping out points of interest. But how much time do you invest in your travel health? A little time spent on health-related preparation can help to make your vacation or business trip safe, enjoyable and healthy.

Immunizations

If you are traveling abroad you may be encouraged, if not required, to have certain immunizations. The following are suggestions for obtaining appropriate travel-related immunizations.

- To determine the recommended immunizations, ask your doctor or contact the United States embassy of your destination country. Immunization information can be found at Travel Health Online (www.tripprep.com), which utilizes information from governmental agencies and the World Health Organization. Furthermore, you can research the Center for Disease Control directly (www.edc.gov/travel/travel/travel.html) or access their traveler's hotline at 404-332-4559.
- Some health insurance policies have restrictions in their coverage for travel-related immunizations. Call your insurance company for benefit details prior to obtaining your immunizations. Be prepared to pay between $30 to $300 per immunization.
- In the event that your doctor does not provide the immunization that you require, you may be able to locate a practitioner that specializes in travel medicine. Your local public health department may have referrals to these practices in your area. Travel Health Online (www.tripprep.com/clinics/clinics) also lists both domestic and international listings for practitioners that provide travel-related immunizations.
- Since some immunizations are given in a series (i.e. Hepatitis; Typhoid), allow up to three months to complete the sequence.

Medications

For many, a daily regimen of medicine can take some planning. This is especially true when traveling. Here are some suggestions about how to organize your medications for a trip:

- Pack enough medications for your daily dosage to last the entire trip. Include an extra few days’ worth to account for unexpected delays.
- Pack your medications in your carry-on luggage to avoid losing it with missing luggage.
- Make a list of the names of your medicines, the correct dosage and times of day taken.
- Bring a copy of your prescriptions with the generic name (in case it has a different brand name in the country you are visiting).
- Carry an ID bracelet or wallet card documenting any medical conditions (i.e. diabetes) and any drug allergies.
- If you use glasses or contact lenses, bring an extra set and include a copy of the prescription for your lenses. Remember to bring enough cleansing solution.
- Anticipate additional needs (i.e. headaches, diarrhea, allergies) and include sufficient amounts of over-the-counter medications.

Prepare for Emergencies

Being prepared for an emergency can make it less traumatic for everyone involved. Furthermore, your insurance carrier might have a few required procedures to follow, which will help with the cost.

- **Call your insurance carrier and ask about plan coverage while away from home.** Many plans will only cover services for life-threatening emergencies (i.e. problems breathing; heart problems) or when something needs medical attention (i.e. sprained ankle; bronchitis). However, not all hospitals will bill your insurance plan directly. If this is the case, be prepared to pay at the time of services and submit the claim on your own behalf. If your insurance does not provide coverage for you while traveling abroad, you may be able to purchase travel insurance through an insurance broker or travel agent.
• **If traveling within the United States:** Your insurance carrier might only cover services rendered at hospitals or urgent care facilities that are associated with your plan's contracted network. Before you leave on your trip, call your insurance carrier or network administrator to obtain names of facilities that are near your destination or along your travel route.

• **If traveling abroad:** If you need medical attention, the United States embassy can usually provide names of reputable, English-speaking doctors. Also, hotel clerks, tour guides or taxi drivers can direct you to the larger hospitals, which will tend to have English-speaking personnel. As there are no universal medical billing procedures, ask that an English-speaking employee itemize which services were provided, so that your insurance claims department can define the procedures in terms of American billing codes.

### Jet Lag
Jet lag can be a difficult adjustment both physically and emotionally. Common complaints are headaches, stomach problems, fatigue and irritability. The following suggestions can minimize these symptoms.

- **Before your trip get a good night's rest.** Upon your arrival, do not expect to do a lot of sightseeing. On the first day, allow yourself time to rest and begin adjusting to the new time zone.
- **Drink plenty of water.** It is suggested to drink 8 ounces of water prior to your trip and one litter of water for every hour in the air. Similarly, avoid excessive use of diuretics such as coffee, soda and alcohol. Dehydration, caused by the dry environment in the aircraft, is a primary source of the discomforts associated with jet lag.
- **Set your schedule to your destination's schedule.** For example, turn on your overhead light when it is day time at your destination and pull down your window shades when it is night. Some airlines will serve a "Jet Lag Diet" -- meals that correspond with the appropriate time of day at your destination.
- **When possible exercise.** Walk around the cabin to stretch your legs. Bring a tennis ball to squeeze in your hand. This will help improve circulation of oxygen throughout your entire body.
- **Some studies suggest that melatonin supplements can help with jet lag, as well as with certain sleep disorders.** Melatonin is a hormone that is connected to an individual's biorhythms; its production is triggered by light stimulation through the eye to the pineal gland. If you are considering Melatonin, it is important to consult your doctor about appropriate dosage and medication interactions.

### Travel Health Tips for Children
The following are tips for parents to keep in mind for their children.

- **If your children will not be accompanying you,** make certain their caregivers have signed medical releases and heath insurance information is readily available. Also, sign a release for care at your hospital in case of emergencies.
- **Immunization formulas for infants can vary.** The following web site addresses federal recommended guidelines for young children: [www.cdc.gov/travel/vaxundr2.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/vaxundr2.htm).
- **Most airlines will provide discounts for children under two if car seats are brought aboard.** When making reservations, ask for the width of the airline seat to make certain your child safety seat will fit.
- **If your child is prone to earaches or sinus problems,** high altitude travel can exacerbate their pain. Frequent swallowing can help neutralize air pressure. Providing a bottle or nursing can assist with this. If this is not convenient, chewing crackers or sucking on hard candy can help. Avoid gum as it might cause a choking hazard during turbulence.
- **Bring plenty of snacks,** as the airlines are prohibited from serving food or drink during take-off and landing.
- **Look into ordering special children's meals,** by calling the airline at least 24 hours before departure.
- **Bring plenty of games,** books, and audiotapes for long trips. An engaged child will have a positive impact on your own travel mental health.

For more information, contact CareCounsel at 1-888-227-3334.