Travel Health Tips from the Student Health Center 14-15

General Comments

- Learn the emergency medical system for the area, e.g. 911.
- Ask your Resident Director or host program contact for referrals to local healthcare and mental health providers as soon as you arrive.
- Plan to pay for medical services at the time rendered. Obtain a receipt that includes the diagnosis; send it with a completed claim form to your insurance company for reimbursement. Obtain a copy of all your medical records, including lab tests, in case symptoms return once you are back in the states.

Personal Health Care

- Schedule a dental checkup before departure.
- See your family healthcare provider for a physical, annual exam or check-up on any ongoing medical conditions before departure.
- Take a spare pair of glasses and your contact lens prescription.
- Prescription medications: take along a sufficient supply for the duration of your travel. Contact your insurance prescription plan ahead of time about their rules to obtain an extended supply of medications. Keep medications in their original containers and pack them in your carry-on luggage. You may want to take a copy of your prescription as well as the package insert in case you lose your supply. If you are on a controlled substance such as Adderall, you will have to establish care with a Dr. in country as you will not be able to obtain more than 1-3 month supply at a time in the US.
- Talk with a health care professional about safer sex practices and lowering the risk of STIs and pregnancy. Be prepared to insist on the practices you choose with any potential partner. Safeguarding your health is always a priority over cultural sensitivity.
- Use condoms from the USA. HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, Gonorrhea and Chlamydia are flourishing worldwide. If you think you or a friend may be sexually active while abroad prepare now to be safely active.
- To lessen jet lag: drink water, decrease caffeine intake and avoid alcohol consumption. Change your watch to the new time zone as soon as you board the plane. When you arrive, go outdoors and walk. Your body is able to reset its own clock by 1-2 hours per day. Light has the most powerful influence on your internal clock.
- Flights greater than 4 hours can promote formation of deep vein thrombosis (blood clots). Prevent this by getting up and moving as much as possible and doing heel circles and/or point and flex ankles every 30 minutes, especially if you take hormonal birth control (pills, patch, nuva ring, etc.).
- Wash your hands 4 times more often than you do in the US, cover your cough and avoid touching your face. If possible, avoid sitting next to passengers with a significant cough.
- For diarrhea and upset stomach: take Pepto Bismol or Tums chewable tabs and increase hydration (a sport drink diluted 1:1 with water or Emergen-C help to re-supply electrolytes). Avoid dairy products. If diarrhea persists beyond 3-5 days, an antibiotic may be helpful (students can schedule an appointment at the Student Health Center to receive a prescription before travel). If diarrhea continues beyond 5 days or is bloody, seek medical care abroad.
- Know how to express your allergies in the native language and make sure that your travel companions know what you are allergic to. If any cause anaphylaxis, carry at least one epi-pen (be sure it doesn’t expire while you are abroad). Teach your companions how to use the epi-pen and where you keep it.
Avoid

- Raw or undercooked meat and unwashed fresh food.
- Untreated or unfiltered water and ice. Consider the water used to prepare, i.e. the ice cream scoop dipped in contaminated water. Wipe rims of bottles or cans before drinking. Use portable water filters that filter to 1 micron. Safe beverages are boiled water, canned or bottled with a secure seal.
- Live poultry around homes and/or markets.
- Piercing and tattooing. It is best to avoid completely but if you choose not to, be sure to question their sterile process and watch for signs of infection.
- Mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, etc. CDC recommends repellants with 35% DEET on your skin and permethrin spray on your clothes (lower percentage means more frequent application).
- Submerging your head in any body of water. Avoid swimming in freshwater, even if it looks fun.
- Excessive use of alcohol.

Medical Kit Suggestions

- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain or fever
- Antihistamine (such as Claritin or Benadryl) for allergies, to ease the itch of insect bites or stings
- Pepto Bismol or Tums for diarrhea and upset stomach. Chewable tablets are easy to pack
- Re-hydration mixture for treatment of severe diarrhea
- Triple antibiotic ointment for cuts and scratches
- Bandages and Band-Aids for minor injuries
- Scissors, pocket knife or tweezers (in checked luggage)
- Disposable or digital thermometers
- Insect repellent, sunscreen, lip balm, and water purification tablets or filter
- Cold and flu tablets and throat lozenges
- Contraceptives, emergency contraception and/or condoms
- Dental floss
- Aloe to soothe sunburn
- Mole Skin for blister prevention
- Feminine hygiene products (sometimes difficult to find abroad) or Diva Cup
- Monistat for yeast and fungal infections
- Contact lens solution/cleaning system
- Hand sanitizer/disinfecting hand wipes

More Information

http://www.mdtravelhealth.com
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/index.cfm
http://www.who.int/en
http://www.iamat.org
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html (A Safe Trip Abroad)
http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/drugs/drugs_1237.html (Travel Warning on Drugs Abroad)