



Tips to help keep you healthy on your trip

Even though you may have had some vaccinations and may be taking antimalarials it is important that you take some simple steps to help stay healthy on your trip. There are disease risks that cannot be vaccinated against and vaccines and antimalarials are not always 100% effective.

Diseases caught when bacteria, viruses or parasites get into your food and drinks

- Only drink water from sealed bottles and/or treat water by filtering, boiling or adding sterilisation chemicals. Avoid ice in drinks – it may be made from contaminated water.
- Use bottled/clean treated water not tap water, to brush teeth and wash food.
- Wash hands thoroughly after visiting the toilet or eating food. Consider using cleansing hand wipes or alcohol hand gels.
- Eat fresh, hot, thoroughly cooked food. Avoid food that has been left standing for some time or food that may have been exposed to flies.
- Avoid unpasteurised dairy products, salads, undercooked meat, raw camel milk and uncooked fruit and vegetables unless peeled.
- Avoid eating off dirty cutlery/crockery such as that provided by some street vendors – these can be discreetly wiped clean with antibacterial wipes.

Treating travellers' diarrhoea

- Drink plenty of clean water to replace lost fluids. Avoid alcohol.
- Eat small, light, plain food as soon as you are able. Avoid spicy and fatty foods.
- Rehydration sachets may help, these replace lost sugar and salts in the correct ratio.
- Anti-diarrhoeal medications are not usually required but medicines such as loperamide can help reduce the frequency of episodes for adults.
- Most people do not require antibiotics. The infection usually clears in a few days; the infection may have been caused by a virus, which antibiotics do not treat, and antibiotics may cause side-effects.
- Personal hygiene is key to preventing re-infection and to prevent spread to others. Wash hands thoroughly after visiting the toilet. Take hand wipes and gel for when soap and water are not available.
- If symptoms last for more than 48 hours, you have a temperature of over 38°C or bloody stools seek medical advice.
- Children, older people and those with diabetes, bowel or kidney disease can dehydrate quickly: seek prompt medical advice.

Personal safety

- Take out medical and travel insurance and for Europe, an EHIC card – see the NaTHNaC website address below.
- Find out about your destination and the local culture and laws.
- Travel safely: avoid night journeys and unregulated bus, taxi or hire car companies. Use transport with seatbelts, take child seats with you and wear helmets where applicable. Avoid travelling alone at night.
- Think about safety in and near water. Supervise children, remember that currents can be deceptive and assess water sports, boat and jet ski hire companies before booking.
- Look after yourself: don't display valuables; take enough money and more than one means of payment with you, and copies of your passport and other travel documents. Trust your instincts – don't take risks that you wouldn't take in the UK and visit the Foreign Offices' Travel Aware website below.
- Holidays present all sorts of health risks that may be different or greater than those at home: take a few moments to pause and reflect before making quick decisions about new activities such as scuba diving or mountaineering; driving abroad; drinking more than usual and other risks you may not normally take.
- This advice sheet cannot cover all, but recommends that if you are planning specialist activities or want to understand more about other potential health risks than those covered here including how to manage mental health issues abroad, you consult the following websites:

www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheets

<https://www.gov.uk/travelaware>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health>

Diseases caught when a virus from someone else gets into your body through exchange of body fluids

- Avoid activities which increase the chances of getting contaminated with some else's bodily fluids (blood, semen, vaginal fluids): unprotected sex; using equipment that may be contaminated with other's blood (e.g. toothbrushes, syringe needles, razors, tattoo and body piercing tools).
- Always use a condom during any form of sex.
- Take a sterile needle medical kit if travelling to resource poor areas where infections such as hepatitis B and HIV are risks.
- Seek urgent medical advice if you may have been exposed to someone else's body fluids. HIV testing, and a booster hepatitis B vaccination may be required.

Diseases caught when an animal bites you or their saliva gets into your blood through a scratch

- Do not approach or stroke animals even if they look well. Be extra vigilant if animals are close by. Avoid feeding monkeys.
- Treat any scratch or bite from any animal as potential rabies. Licks on broken skin are a risk too.
- Bat bites / scratches should always be assessed urgently even if the wound seems trivial.
- Clean the wound – flush under running tap water for several minutes and wash with soap or detergent (40-70% alcohol or an antiseptic solution).
- Loosely cover with a simple dressing but DO NOT stitch or close the wound.
- Go to the nearest hospital or clinic – THIS IS URGENT. Even if you were vaccinated before the trip you will need some additional injections.
- If you were not vaccinated before your trip, it is vital you get assessed as soon as possible at the nearest hospital or clinic as you may require urgent immunoglobulin and to start a course of vaccines.
- Avoid close contact with all animals, birds and bats including camels in the Middle East as they may harbour other diseases. Avoid animal/bird markets or farms and wash hands frequently.

Sun exposure

- Use sunscreen of *at least* 30 SPF with a UVA rating of 3 or 4 stars, on all parts of the body that will be exposed and put this on liberally at least 30 minutes before going out into the sun. Reapply frequently, at least every 2 hours and more if you are swimming or sweating. Higher strength sunscreen gives longer protection.
- **When both sunscreen and DEET are required**, the sunscreen should be applied first and allowed to be adsorbed and then the DEET applied after. 30 to 50 SPF sunscreen should be used because DEET can reduce SPF effectiveness. Sunscreen is not required from dusk to dawn.
- Stay out of the sun when it is hottest – between 11am and 3 pm. Wear hat and clothes that keep the body covered and cool and wear sunglasses to protect the eyes from sun damage.
- If you do get burned – cool the skin in a shower or bath. Drink plenty of fluids; apply a moisturiser or after-sun cream; painkillers can help reduce the pain and inflammation of sunburn. Stay out of the sun until the skin has healed.
- Severe sunburn needs treating like any other burn and may require a visit to the local emergency hospital.



Preventing malaria and other infections caught from insect bites

Biting insects are found wherever you travel in the world. At best they are a nuisance, at worst they cause serious and sometimes fatal illnesses such as malaria.

Malaria is preventable and by following this ABCD you will know how to avoid it. By preventing bites from mosquitoes, flies, ticks, lice, beetles and spiders you will also be protecting yourself against many other infections too. There are too many to name them all but Zika, dengue, Japanese encephalitis, yellow fever, leishmaniasis, chikungunya, tick-borne encephalitis and others are all spread through insect bites.

A Awareness

You need to be aware if there is a risk of malaria in the areas you are travelling to. If there is a high malaria risk, you are recommended to take antimalarials; if there is a very low risk only bite prevention is required. Even if there is no risk of malaria it is still be worth taking steps to prevent other mosquito borne infections such as dengue, yellow fever and zika and bites from other insects.

B Bites

There are four ways to prevent bites: repellent, insecticide, clothing and managing your immediate environment. The more measures that you use together, the more protection you will have.

Garlic, vitamin B, Marmite™, bath oils, citronella, alcohol and ultrasound devices do not prevent bites!

1. Insect repellent

- DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) is the most effective repellent. It can be used from the age of two months, and during pregnancy (check the wording on the product pack).
- Strengths from 20% to 50% are recommended. 20% DEET lasts 1 to 3 hours; DEET 50% lasts up to 12 hours so will need applying less frequently than lower strengths but sweating and swimming will require re-application.
- DEET should be applied after sunscreen and may reduce sunscreen effectiveness. DEET can damage plastic and other materials. It is available in a range of formulations such as sprays, creams, lotions, sticks, gel and wipes.
- Picaridin 20% insect repellent is an alternative to DEET.
- Use your hands to apply insect repellents onto exposed skin, avoiding your eyes, nose, mouth and any broken skin, then wash your hands.

2. Insecticide

- Permethrin is effective and can be bought to soak or spray on some clothing and bed nets (repeat after 6 months). Insecticide coils are for burning outdoors, for instance when camping. Knock-down fly sprays have limited effectiveness.

3. Clothing

- Cover up, especially at night, with loose, close-weave fabrics which are difficult for mosquitoes to penetrate. The more the body is covered, the less opportunity a mosquito has to bite.
- Socks tucked into trousers will stop ticks from reaching you, and footwear will reduce the chances of a bite from a sandfly.
- The colour of clothing does not matter, except for African tsetse flies which are attracted to darker colours, especially blue.
- Treating cotton clothes with insecticide will also help by killing insects on contact.

4. Environment

- There are many ways to manage the immediate environment so that mosquito bites are reduced or prevented. Try to avoid being outside between dusk and dawn when malaria-carrying mosquitoes feed.
- Sleep under an intact mosquito net, preferably one that has been treated with permethrin insecticide, or one of the long-lasting impregnated nets. Nets come in shapes for cots to king-size beds: check the method of fixing can be used in your room.
- Staying indoors at night, using window and door insect screens, room sprays, air conditioning, fans and electric vaporisers will all help too.
- Mosquitoes and other insects carrying different infections can bite during the daytime, so you may need to consider 24-hour protection.

C Chemoprophylaxis

- These are the drugs used to prevent malaria. No medicine is 100% effective but when used as advised, anti-malaria medicines are very successful.
- If while travelling abroad you experience significant side effects, STOP taking your antimalarials and seek medical advice immediately.
- If you extend your trip or change your itinerary, seek medical advice immediately/as soon as possible, as you may require additional antimalarials.
- Store them away from children's reach.

- Follow the instructions included with your tablets carefully and continue to take your tablets after you return from your trip to cover the incubation period of the disease.

D Diagnosis

- Fever in a traveller who has returned from a malarial area is always malaria until proven otherwise. See your doctor if you become unwell with a temperature, up to a year after your return.
- While abroad, check carefully for ticks. Ask a travelling companion to check your back – the place you cannot see.
- Carefully and promptly remove ticks using fine-tipped tweezers; grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible and pull gently ensuring the head and body is removed intact– the sooner they're removed the less chance they have to infect.
- Treat insect bites by keeping the skin clean, try not to scratch and use a cold compress to relieve itching. Speak to your pharmacist about products to relieve pain, itching and inflammation.

When you return home

- If you develop any illness in the months after you return from your trip it may be something you caught overseas. Make sure you inform your GP of your trip when they are diagnosing your illness.
- If you get flu-like symptoms at any time up to 12 months after you return it may be malaria. You must see your GP or a hospital doctor as soon as possible.
- Provide details of all countries visited in the last 12 months.
- Malaria can develop very quickly so it is important to get a diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible.
- Complete your full course of antimalarials or they will not work properly, and you may still get malaria – they are needed to kill off any parasites that are still in your blood, even after you return home.
- Had a new sexual partner abroad? Book a routine check-up at a sexual health or GUM (genitourinary medicine) clinic – it's a free and confidential service