



TRAVEL HEALTH

Everyone wants to have a happy, healthy, enjoyable and safe trip when travelling overseas. Many countries, particularly remote areas can pose health risks. With some simple planning you can help ensure that any health concerns don't interfere with the enjoyment of your overseas travel, ensuring you have a safe trip and return healthy.

DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

DVT is sometimes referred to as 'travellers thrombosis' or 'economy class syndrome'.

DVT is the formation of a clot in the deep veins of the leg. Sitting for long periods of time while travelling may be associated with this condition.

Risk Factors include:

- over 40 years of age
- recent surgery
- taking hormone therapy
- family history of DVT
- blood clotting disorders
- certain medical conditions, e.g. heart disease.
- smoking
- pregnancy
- obesity

Symptoms

- there may be no symptoms
- a mild ache in a leg
- leg swelling and redness

JET LAG

The degree of jet lag depends upon the number of time zones crossed and in which direction, east or west. Your body clock can take days or even weeks to get used to the local time of your new destination.

Symptoms

- anxiety, feeling disoriented
- forgetfulness, poor concentration
- poor appetite, upset stomach
- weakness, irritability, tiredness, disturbed sleep
- headache
- being alert, sleepy and hungry at the wrong times.

TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA (TD)

TD remains the single most common illness affecting travellers. Eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water or ice most commonly causes TD.

Symptoms

- stomach cramps
- frequent runny, watery bowel motions
- sometimes vomiting, fever or bloody bowel motions.

MALARIA

Malaria is a serious disease caused by a parasite that infects red blood cells. There are four different malaria parasites. Anyone can get malaria if they are bitten by an infected mosquito in a region where malaria occurs.

Symptoms

- fever, chills, sweating
- headache.

The most serious form of malaria can cause organ failure, coma or even death.

SELF CARE

BEFORE LEAVING

- visit your doctor and dentist for a checkup at least eight weeks before you travel
- purchase health and travel insurance
- ensure your immunisations are up to date – check to see if you need any special vaccines (ask your doctor, pharmacist or travel agent)
- if you take regular medicines, ensure you have enough for your trip and take a letter from your doctor listing any medicines and special devices you require
- always carry a first aid kit. Completing a first aid course and carrying an emergency dental kit may also be useful if travelling to remote areas
- wear a Medic Alert bracelet or necklace if you have a serious health condition or allergy (ask your pharmacist).

DVT

- Move around as much as possible and exercise calf muscles half hourly.
- Drink plenty of water and juice but avoid alcohol and caffeine containing drinks.
- If you are in a high risk group for DVT see your doctor before you travel.

JET LAG

- If possible break your trip up by including stopovers in your travel plans.
- Try to plan your arrival at your destination around bedtime.
- Set your watch to the local time of your new destination. Eat and sleep according to this time during the flight.
- Eat light healthy meals and wear loose, comfortable clothing during the flight.
- Try to sleep on longer legs of the flight. A mild sleeping tablet may help (ask your doctor or pharmacist).

TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA

- Drink small amounts of fluid often e.g. oral dehydration solution, boiled water.
- Rest and eat starchy foods e.g. cooked rice, mashed potato, porridge.
- Drink only boiled, canned or bottled drinks – don't add ice.
- Avoid shellfish, cold cooked meats.
- Don't eat fresh salads, raw vegetables or cut fruit - if you can't peel it, cook it or boil it, don't eat it.
- Wash your hands before meals and after each toilet visit. Dry your hands with your own towel or let them air dry.

MALARIA

- Use insect repellent at regular intervals
- Use mosquito nets.
- Cover arms, legs and ankles with clothing when outdoors, especially after sunset.
- Check if you need to take medicines to reduce your risk of getting malaria at your holiday destination. (Ask your doctor or pharmacist).
- Ensure you have sufficient anti-malaria medication to last you the whole trip.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

GENERAL

- If you plan to spend time outdoors, use a 30+ sunscreen and lip balm, particularly in tropical areas or at high altitude.
- HIV, hepatitis B, genital herpes and other sexually transmitted diseases can be caught from unprotected sexual intercourse. Whether you are male or female take condoms with you rather than rely on those bought locally. Always follow safe sex practices.
- Travellers on 'adventure' holidays will need specialised advice regarding altitude sickness and other health issues.
- Special preparation may be necessary if you are travelling with children or are over sixty years of age.

ON RETURNING

Always tell your doctor if you have been overseas. Some diseases can take many months to show up. See your doctor after returning home if you get:

- any fever or flu-like symptoms
- diarrhoea that won't go away
- skin problems e.g. rash
- any other unusual symptoms.

Related information

MILLS, DJ. Travelling Well (revised annually)

Write to: Dr Deborah Mills
PO Box 375
ALBION QLD 4010

Other relevant Fact Cards

- *First Aid*
- *Vomiting & Diarrhoea*
- *Sense in the Sun*
- *HIV/AIDS*

Contact

Your doctor - listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book

Travellers Medical and Vaccination Centre - ph 1300 658 844 or www.tmvc.com.au

MASTA (Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad) - ph 1300 655 565 or www.masta.edu.au

Your Self Care pharmacist. To find: (02) 6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN

DAVID S. NOLTE PHARMACY 701 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH CARLTON • 9349 1522 • 21767P

Pharmacy Self Care has a strong commitment to providing current and reliable health information.
The information in this card was current at time of printing.

