

## ➔ BEFORE YOU GO

- Check your passport has at least 6 month validity beyond your return date.
- Check if you need a VISA/ESTA for any countries you are visiting & transiting through.
- Travel insurance is ALWAYS highly recommended.
- Visit [smartraveller.gov.au](http://smartraveller.gov.au) for travel alerts and advice regarding your destination.
- Keep an electronic copy of your important documents somewhere safe.

## ➔ VACCINATIONS & MEDICATIONS

- To optimise your health and safety for your travels, see your GP at least 6 weeks before you go.
- Documentation of Yellow Fever and COVID-19 vaccination may be required for some destinations.
- If you have regular medications – ensure you have an adequate supply for your trip. You may need a letter from your doctor.
- Always carry your medication in your hand luggage in case your checked in luggage is lost or delayed.
- Not all medications that are prescribed in Australia are legal in other countries particularly pain medication and ADHD stimulants. Ensure you check before you travel.

## ➔ SAFE TRAVELS

### General Safety

- Be aware of pickpockets, consider a money belt and locks for luggage.
- Wear a helmet and protective gear if you hire a scooter/motorbike.
- Remember sun protection and insect repellent.
- Abide by the local laws & customs of the country you are visiting.
- Avoid drinking alcohol with strangers.
- Remember to always use condoms.
- Wear FFP2 face masks in more densely populated environments including on flights and on public transport to minimise your risk of respiratory infections including COVID-19.

### With Children

- Some tips to make travelling with children easier.
- Never leave children alone especially around water, animals and strangers.
  - Always carry fluid with you. A snack in a bag goes a long way if delays are encountered.
  - Changes of clothing appropriate for the weather are handy for spills and accidents.
  - Protect from insect bites; preparations of up to 30% DEET for skin, and permethrin impregnated external clothing and nets. Long sleeved clothing is always advised.
  - Medical Kit- include paracetamol or ibuprofen for fever and pain, sunscreen, dressings for bites/sores/cuts & grazes, rehydration solutions, antihistamines for allergy and travel sickness.
  - Avoid excessive sun, plan for frequent rests, access air-conditioned rooms, and encourage your children to drink plenty of fluids.
  - Minimise the number of bags you will carry. Being overloaded can make it difficult to look after children and can make you a target for thieves.
  - Be aware that child safety standards including pool safety, car seats and toys may not be as strict as in Australia. Supervision is paramount. Consider taking your own car seat if hiring a car.
  - Discuss immunisations for children with your GP; both scheduled and travel specific ones.

## ➔ DVT PREVENTION

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is a clot that forms in the deep veins of your legs. It can travel (embolise) and cause damage to vital organs including the lungs. Long haul flights are a particular risk. Reduce your risk by;

- Staying hydrated with plenty of water.
- Avoiding alcohol and caffeinated drinks.
- Regularly moving throughout the cabin.
- Wearing fitted compression stockings

Some travellers are at higher risk. These include those with a past history of clots, being overweight, being pregnant or having a history of cancer. Certain medications can also increase your likelihood of a DVT. Your doctor will discuss recommendations specific for your needs.



# TRAVEL INFORMATION

## Booked a trip? Now what?

Great question!

Book an appointment with your GP at least 6 weeks prior to departure.

Your appointment will discuss many of the issues that this guide covers, but your doctor will also review your medical history, ensure your vaccinations are up to date, and discuss any specific medical needs you may have for safe travel. It's worthwhile bringing your travel itinerary with you.



# TRAVEL INFORMATION

## ➔ JET LAG

To minimise jet lag, try to adapt to the time zone you are arriving in. If you have trouble sleeping in a new time zone, melatonin can be used safely and without risk of addiction to help normalise sleep patterns. Stopping *en route*, particularly with long journeys can be helpful. Exercise and exposure to light can also help.



## ➔ SAFE TRAVEL IN PREGNANCY

Many women travel during their pregnancy. It is important to discuss your travel plans with your health professional early to optimise your safety whilst travelling. Insurance is highly recommended (and ensure it covers pregnancy care and complications). If you are flying, it is important to check your airline policy as each company will differ slightly. Documentation from your health professional may be required in some instances to fly.

Women who are pregnant may be more prone to infections, or may experience increased disease severity whilst pregnant. Infections can also be harmful for their unborn babies. Vaccinations are available for pregnant women, but not all vaccinations are suitable in pregnancy.



## ➔ INFECTIONS

### FOOD & WATER BOURNE DISEASES

5 star or no star – the risks are still there. It only takes an inadvertent use of tap water when brushing teeth to put you at risk of diseases such as Hepatitis A, typhoid, cholera or traveller's diarrhoea. Unfortunately, these are extremely common especially in developing countries and can ruin your holiday. Symptoms commonly encountered include diarrhoea, stomach pains, nausea and/or vomiting. Drink bottled water if local water is not safe. Remember this also means not to have ice in your drinks!

Diarrhoea can be prevented with vaccination (i.e. Hepatitis A/Typhoid/Cholera). Ensure you are up to date. Recovery from gastro symptoms can be aided with oral rehydration solutions, pain relief for crampy stomach pains and medication to help with nausea/vomiting. In some rarer instances a course of antibiotics may be required. It's worthwhile also considering medications to limit diarrhoea. Probiotics are used by many, but so far evidence is not conclusive that it is beneficial.

### AIRBORNE and DIRECT CONTACT DISEASES

Serious diseases such as influenza & COVID-19 can be caught through sneezing, coughing, kissing and sharing drinks. Consider vaccination prior to your travel, avoid crowds & sharing drinks and be diligent about personal hygiene including regularly washing your hands. Consider wearing a face mask to protect yourself. If travelling to an area with endemic TB, consider vaccination. This is particularly relevant for patients who are returning to their native homeland with young children in the SE Asian/sub-continent regions.

### SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

Having casual sex, anywhere in the world puts you at high risk of STIs. Some parts of the world can be riskier than others. STIs can include HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhoea, plus many others. Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medications may be suitable to minimise HIV transmission, for some.

Always practise safe sex –use a condom every time.

Consider vaccination for Hep B and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

Always remember to have an STI check-up with your GP upon your return if you have engaged in casual sex during your travels.

### INFECTIONS FROMS INSECTS & ANIMAL BITES

In some countries mosquitos can carry malaria, Japanese Encephalitis, Dengue, Yellow Fever, Chikungunya or Zika virus. Vaccination is available against Japanese Encephalitis and Yellow Fever only. Avoiding being bitten is key. This includes;

- Long sleeves and pants
- Insect repellent with at least 30% DEET
- Sleeping under netting
- Netting and clothing can be impregnated with permethrin for added protection from bites

### Other considerations

- Anti-malarial medications may be recommended by your doctor
- Zika is important to consider if you are planning pregnancy (both males and females) or are pregnant
- Consider immunisation against Yellow Fever and Japanese Encephalitis

### Other bites:

Rabies is spread by infected dogs, monkeys and bats. Immunisation is available and no one is too young. Children are at high risk as they are bitten more frequently than adults, and bites commonly occur on the head & neck.

Stray animals are often found in underdeveloped countries including Thailand and Indonesia (where Australians like to travel). Be mindful not to pat them as bites and scratches occur frequently.

# TRAVEL INFORMATION

## ➔ ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Altitude sickness can occur at altitudes above 2500m and affects a small proportion of travellers. Symptoms can be mild (headaches, lethargy and tiredness) or be more severe (significant confusion, altered conscious state, vomiting). Anyone at any altitude can be affected – even experienced mountain climbers.

Prevention is the key. A gradual and slow ascent allows your body to acclimatise. It is optimal to spend some days below 2400m before ascending higher. Having a rest day every 1000m is important. Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol and sedatives. If you experience any symptoms – tell someone. It is important to rest at this altitude for an extra day or more, or descend if more severe symptoms occur. Prophylactic medications might be recommended by your doctor.

## ➔ CRUISE SHIP TRAVEL

Relaxing on a cruise ship is a popular way to holiday. Illnesses, particularly respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses are often seen. Be prepared for your journey by considering a comprehensive first aid kit.

## ➔ RETURNED TRAVELLERS

If you have been unwell whilst overseas, or return unwell; you should see your GP. For those who have engaged in casual sex during their travel, it's a good idea to have an STI screen. Don't forget to complete the entire course of antimalarial tablets, if these were prescribed.



## ➔ FIRST AID KIT

It's a good idea to take a first aid kit when travelling. Planning ahead may go a long way in preventing illness and help manage any symptoms. Your destination and your travel companions (i.e. children/elderly) will influence what you put in your kit. Basic kits should contain something to detect and treat fever, pain, cuts, scrapes and blisters. It might also useful to pack insect repellent, mosquito nets, clothing impregnation kits, sunscreen as well as hydration solutions to manage diarrhoea.

Travellers can also consider antibiotics to manage gastroenteritis, antimalarials and medication for nausea and vomiting depending on their destination.

First aid kits can be recommended for you by your GP if required. Ideally they would include;

- Bandages, plasters and strapping tape
- Anti-bacterial solutions and creams
- Oral rehydration powders/salts
- Medication for nausea
- Medication for stomach cramps
- Simple pain relief
- Anti-histamines to help with itchy bites and allergies
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent containing at least 30% DEET
- Compression socks/stockings
- Condoms
- Spare set of reading glasses/contact lenses.
- A summary of past medical history including an up to date list of regular medications, allergies and vaccinations.

## ➔ Useful Resources

[www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)  
[www.dfat.gov.au/travel/Pages/travel](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel/Pages/travel)  
[www.royalparkmedical.com.au](http://www.royalparkmedical.com.au)

## ➔ CONTACT DETAILS

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