

Health advice for travellers

Before you travel

When planning your trip, think of ways to stay healthy while travelling:

- Check the travel advisories and health notices for your destination(s) to help you make informed decisions and stay safe while traveling outside Canada
- Visit a travel clinic at least 4 weeks before your trip to get the immunizations you need
- Consider buying medical insurance
- Make or buy a first aid kit for common health concerns. Include pain and fever medication, cold remedies, tweezers, scissors, bandages and mosquito repellent. Bring medication to help prevent and treat diarrhea
- Have a dental check-up
- Take an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses and a written prescription from your eye doctor
- If you have an ongoing health concern, talk to your health care provider about your trip. Ask your doctor for a letter stating your medical history and prescribed medications. Carry a medical aid kit with medications and other supplies you need

While you travel to your destination

- Travel can be tiring – get plenty of sleep before you leave for your destination
- If you suffer from motion sickness and plan to travel by plane, sit in a seat above the wing. Try to move your head as little as possible. You may want to take an anti-nausea medication for the symptoms

- Wear loose clothing and comfortable shoes
- Drink plenty of water and/or juice and avoid alcohol and drinks with caffeine to avoid dehydration
- Eat light meals
- Walk around and stretch your legs to help improve circulation
- When you arrive at your destination, try to eat and sleep according to local time

Food and water safety in developing countries

- Eat foods that are well cooked and served hot. Avoid foods that are served at room temperature. Do not eat food sold by street vendors
- Drink bottled water, bottled drinks or beverages made with boiled water. Do not drink tap water. Ice made from purified or disinfected water may be used
- Use bottled or boiled water for brushing teeth
- Make sure dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt are pasteurized and refrigerated. If in doubt, avoid them
- Do not eat custards, mousses, mayonnaise or hollandaise sauce because they contain raw eggs
- Do not eat raw vegetables, salads or fruits that cannot be peeled, such as grapes or strawberries. Wash and peel your own fruits and vegetables. Do not eat the produce if the skin is broken or bruised
- Do not eat undercooked or raw meat, fish or shellfish

Sun protection

- Protect your skin and eyes from damage caused by the sun. Wear clothing that covers your skin and eyes such as a hat with a wide brim and sunglasses with ultraviolet or UV protection
- Apply a sunscreen with SPF 30 (sun protection factor) 30 minutes before going out into the sun. Apply the sunscreen according to the instructions on the label. Use lip balm with SPF of 30 or higher
- Apply insect repellent 15 to 30 minutes after sunscreen. Products that combine sunscreen and repellent are not recommended. Sunscreen can be re-applied after repellent
- Avoid or limit your time in the sun between 10 am and 4 pm. The sun's rays are stronger at high altitudes and when reflected from snow, water and sand

For more information on sun safety, visit [HealthLinkBC File #26 Sun safety for children](#).

Safer sex

- Always use a condom for sexual intercourse, even if you use other methods of contraception. Condoms cannot prevent every case of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), but they can reduce the risk
- Avoid engaging in sexual activities that permit sexual fluids to enter your body

For more information on preventing STIs, visit [HealthLinkBC File #08o Preventing sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#).

Injury prevention

- Wear closed-toe shoes to prevent cuts, wounds, insect or snake bites or infection from parasites
- Be very careful when driving in a foreign country or on unfamiliar roads. Use your

seat belt. Do not drink alcohol and drive. Be sure to use common sense and caution

Swimming

- Wade or swim only in pools filled with clean, disinfected water
- Do not swim in tropical waters, streams, canals or lakes, which may contain parasites that cause disease
- Do not swim in the ocean if it is near sewage outlets or freshwater streams

Animal bites

- Except in Antarctica, rabies occurs worldwide with a higher risk in Central and South America and the Caribbean. It is spread by licks, bites or scratches from rabies-infected domestic and wild animals
- Do not pet or feed dogs, cats or other domestic animals. Avoid contact with all wild animals, including monkeys
- If bitten or scratched, cleanse the wound with soap and clean water right away. Ask local health authorities if you need rabies treatment. Contact your local health authority when you return home to complete rabies treatment

For more information on rabies visit [HealthLinkBC File #07a Rabies](#).

Prevent insect-borne diseases

- Insect bites can spread diseases such as chikungunya, Zika, dengue fever, malaria, yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis. Take extra caution in tropical areas
- Carry and use mosquito repellent

For more information on mosquito repellents and tips to prevent mosquito bites, visit [HealthLinkBC File #41f Malaria prevention](#).

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/health-library/healthlinkbc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C., visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.