

TRAVEL ADVICE LEAFLET

Derby Road Health Centre

This leaflet is designed to remind you of some of the information the nurse gave you when you visited for your travel appointment. PLEASE READ IT! The information will help you to stay healthy in your trip.

WATER

Diseases can be caught from drinking contaminated water, or swimming in it. Unless you KNOW the water supply is safe where you are staying ONLY USE:

- Bottled water or canned drinks
- Boiled water
- Water treated by a sterilising agent

This includes ICE CUBES in drinks and water for CLEANING YOUR TEETH

SWIMMING

It is safer to swim in water that is well chlorinated. If you are travelling to Africa, South America or some parts of the Caribbean avoid swimming in fresh water lakes and streams. You can catch a parasitic disease called schistosomiasis (or bilharzia) from such places. It is wise never to go barefoot, but to wear protective footwear when out, even on the beach. Other diseases can be caught from sand and soil, particularly wet soil.

FOOD

Contaminated food is the commonest source of many diseases abroad. You can help prevent it by following these guidelines:

- Eat only well cooked fresh food
- Avoid leftovers and reheated foods
- Ensure meat is thoroughly cooked
- Eat cooked vegetables, avoid salads
- Only eat fruit you can peel
- Never drink unpasteurised milk
- Avoid ice cream, soft cheeses and shellfish
- Avoid buying food from street-vendors stalls

Two phrases to help you remember

1. COOK IT, PEEL IT OR LEAVE IT
2. WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Many diseases are transmitted by what is known as the 'faecal-oral' route. To help prevent this, always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, before eating and before handling food.

TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA

This is the MOST COMMON ILLNESS that you will be exposed to abroad. Travellers' diarrhoea is caused by eating and/or drinking food and water contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites. Risk of illness is higher in some countries than others.

High risk areas include North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, S.E. Asia, South America, Mexico and the Middle East.

You should follow the food, water and personal hygiene guidelines already given. Travellers diarrhoea is 4 or more loose stools in a 24hr period often accompanied by stomach pain, cramps and vomiting. It usually lasts 2-4 days and whilst it is not a life

threatening illness, it can disrupt your trip for several days. The main danger of the illness is **dehydration** and this, if very severe, can kill if it is not treated. Treatment is therefore **rehydration**. In severe cases and particularly in young children and the elderly commercially prepared rehydration solution is extremely useful. This can be bought in tablet or sachet form at a chemist shop (e.g. Dioralyte). Dioralyte relief is a formula containing rice powder which also helps to relieve the diarrhoea, particularly useful in children). Prepare according to instructions.

It is best to let the illness run its course but if you need to travel etc then **anti-diarrhoeal tablets** can be used for adults. They should NEVER be used in children under 4 yrs of age and only on prescription for children aged 4 to 12 yrs.

None of these tablets should ever be used if the person has a temperature or blood in the stool.

DO CONTACT MEDICAL HELP IF THE AFFECTED PERSON HAS:

- A temperature
- Blood in the diarrhoea
- Diarrhoea for more than 48hours (or 24 hours in children)
- Becomes confused

In very special circumstances, antibiotics are used for diarrhoea, but this decision should only be made by a doctor. (A woman taking the oral contraceptive pill may not have full contraceptive protection if she has diarrhoea and vomiting. Extra precautions must be used – refer to your ‘pill’ information leaflet. If using condoms, use products with the British Kite Mark)

HEPATITIS B and HIV INFECTION

These diseases can be transmitted by

- Blood transfusion
- Medical procedures with non sterile equipment
- Sharing of needles
- Sexual contact
- Tattoo’s and piercings

WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Only accept a blood transfusion when essential
- If travelling to a developing country, take a sterile medical kit
- Avoid procedures e.g. ear/ body piercing, tattooing and acupuncture.
- Don’t share razor blades
- Avoid casual sex, especially without using condoms

Remember - excessive alcohol can make you carefree and lead you to take risks you otherwise would not consider.

INSECT BITES

Mosquitoes, certain types of flies, ticks and bugs can cause many different diseases, e.g. malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever. Some bite at night, but some during daytime.

AVOID BEING BITTEN BY:

- Covering up as much skin as possible when going out (mosquitoes that transmit malaria bite from dusk until dawn). Wear loose clothes, long sleeves, trousers or long skirts.
- Use insect repellents on exposed skin. A content of **30-50% DEET** is recommended for adults in tropical destinations. Spray all exposed areas of skin frequently from first thing in the morning until last thing at night. Check suitability for children on the individual products. Insect repellent should be applied last, after any other lotions or sunscreens.

- If room is not air-conditioned, but screened, close shutters early evening and spray room with knockdown insecticide spray. In malarial regions, if camping or sleeping in unprotected accommodation, always sleep under a mosquito net (impregnated with permethrin). Avoid camping near areas of stagnant water, these are common breeding areas for mosquitoes etc.
- Electric insecticide vaporisers are very effective as long as there are no power failures!
- Electric buzzers, garlic and vitamin B are INEFFECTIVE.

MALARIA

If you are travelling to a malarial area the nurse will have discussed with you which tablets are most suitable.

- Take the tablets as prescribed and make sure you complete the course
- Remember no anti-malarial gives 100% protection, avoiding bites is crucial.
- Seek medical help for any feverish illness whilst away and for up to 1yr on return, especially in the first month. Always tell the doctor you have visited a malaria zone.

ANIMAL BITES

Rabies is present in many parts of the world. If a person develops rabies, death is 100% certain. **There are 3 rules regarding rabies:**

1. Do not touch any animal, even dogs and cats.
2. If you are licked on broken skin, (or around the eyes, nose or mouth) or bitten in a country which has rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for 15 minutes
3. Seek medical advice **IMMEDIATELY** even if you have been previously immunised. Post-exposure vaccination **MUST** be initiated within 24hrs.

ACCIDENTS

Major leading causes of death in travellers are swimming and traffic accidents. You can help prevent them by taking the following precautions:

- Avoid alcohol and food before swimming
- Never dive into water where the depth is uncertain
- Only swim in safe water, check currents, sharks, jellyfish etc.
- Avoid alcohol when driving, especially at night
- Avoid hiring motorcycles and mopeds
- If hiring a car, rent a large one if possible, ensure the tyres, brakes and seat belts are in good condition
- Use reliable taxi firms, know where emergency facilities are.

INSURANCE COVER

Take out adequate insurance cover for your trip. *This should include medical repatriation as without it, this service is extremely expensive.*

If you have any pre-existing medical conditions, make sure you inform the insurance company of these details and check the small print of the policy thoroughly.

If you travel to a European Union country, make sure you have obtained an EHIC card before you travel. The EHIC application form is in the T7 leaflet from a post office or you can apply online at www.nhs.uk and search for EHI card. This takes time to obtain so needs to be applied for in advance. Additional travel insurance is still advised.

AIR TRAVEL

It is sensible on any long haul flight to

- Be comfortable in your seat
- Exercise your legs, feet and toes while sitting every half hour or so and take short walks whenever feasible. Upper body and breathing exercises can further improve circulation.
- Drink plenty of water and be sensible about alcohol intake which in excess leads to dehydration.

Further information can be obtained from the Department of Health website detailed below with more specific advice and information on travel-related deep vein thrombosis.

SUN AND HEAT

Sunburn and heat-stroke cause serious problems in travellers, but in the long-term can be a serious cause of skin cancer. Long term damage to the skin due to sun exposure can lead to skin cancer. There is no such thing as a safe suntan but the following advice should be taken:

- Increase sun exposure gradually
- Use sun-blocks of appropriate adequate 'SPF' strength but a minimum of SPF 15. Children under 3 years should be kept out of the sun at all times. Reapply suntan cream often and always after swimming and washing. Read manufacturer instructions.
- Wear protective clothing – sunhats, T shirts and sunglasses etc.
- Avoid going out between 11am – 3pm, when the sun's rays are strongest.
- TAKE SPECIAL CARE of CHILDREN and those with pale skin/ red hair
- Drink extra fluids in a hot climate
- Be aware that alcohol can make you dehydrated.

ZIKA VIRUS- advice is changing regularly.

ZIKV causes an illness similar to dengue fever and is generally mild and self-limiting; lasting 4-7days. Symptoms may include, rash, itching, headache, muscle and joint aches or fever. There may be no symptoms.

All travellers to countries that have reported ZIKV infection must consider:

- Mosquito bite avoidance measures
- Travel insurance
- **Pregnant women** should consider postponing non-essential travel to moderate and high risk areas.
- **Asymptomatic male and all female travellers** (pregnant, non-pregnant, asymptomatic or symptomatic) should use contraception and condoms during travel and for **8 weeks** on return if sexually active, to reduce the risk of sexual transmission of ZIKV, particularly around the time of conception and during pregnancy.
- **Men who develop symptoms** should continue to use condoms for 6 months if sexually active after return.

Please check www.gov.uk for up to date guidance on Zika virus.

This leaflet provides only basic info- suggestions for your further reading:

Specific country info on **Travel Health Pro**- www.travelhealthpro.org.uk

Foreign and Commonwealth Office – www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo

National Travel Health Network and Centre – www.nathnac.org

Altitude advice- <http://www.medex.org.uk/v26%20booklet.pdf>

Further info and links can be found on our website www.drhc.org

HAVE A VERY HAPPY AND HEALTHY TRIP

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