

worldly wise

Wherever you're going for your holiday this year, make sure you've safeguarded your health. Our guide shows you how...

The world can be a hazardous place and every country you visit has its own health concerns. Jabs and treatments aside, even knowing whether the water is safe to drink or not, can make the difference between holiday heaven and holiday hell.

The increase in international travel is said to be a cause for the upsurge in infectious diseases. And just because more and more of us are jetting off each year to foreign climes, it doesn't mean that holidays a little closer to home won't need some preparation, too.

Don't forget that everything you need, including holiday health advice, is available at your local pharmacy. But in the meantime, our guide should put you on the right track...



Vaccinations and preventative treatments

Yellow fever is endemic in parts of Africa. An acute viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes, symptoms range from the mild and flu-like through to haemorrhage, jaundice, liver damage and even death. Vaccination is vital.

Malaria is another disease you must protect yourself against. Don't be tempted to skip taking anti-malarial treatment – in 1997 alone, 2,364 travellers returned to the UK with malaria. Also protect yourself against typhoid, rabies, hepatitis A and B, and meningococcal meningitis.

Tetanus is another one. You may need a

booster, which is valid for 10 years. Polio is also prevalent in tropical and developing countries. And don't forget cholera – clean drinking water is a must (see below), and steer clear of areas with cholera outbreaks.

Check with your particular destination's requirements and discuss it with your doctor should any problems arise.

Food and drink safety

Watch out for the water and always avoid the ice, both in your drinks and packed around food. If you can't get bottled water, filter and purify the tap water. Eat only properly cooked food. Wash and, preferably, peel fruit and vegetables. Avoid shellfish and unpasteurised milk and cheese, and food purchased from street vendors.

Essentials to take

- Anti-malaria tablets
- Insect repellent
- Multivitamins
- Anti-diarrhoea tablets
- Water purification or iodine tablets
- Sunscreen
- Aspirin or paracetamol

Holidays at home

We might not have the sunniest of climates, but sunburn is always one to watch out for. Use a SPF 15+ sunscreen, even on a cloudy day, and apply it liberally and regularly.

Anti-itch creams, aloe vera and calamine lotion will provide relief from insect bites, which you can help avoid by using insect and mosquito repellent. Country holidays for hayfever sufferers can be a nightmare, so remember to pack the antihistamines, too.

- Anti-fungal creams and powders
- Antiseptic
- Antihistamines



Vaccinations and preventative treatments

The USA is a pretty safe place to travel to. Yellow fever is the only must-have jab – not if you are coming directly from the UK; only if you are visiting a high-risk area such as Central Africa and South America, where yellow fever is endemic.

You may need boosters to all the usual things, such as hepatitis, polio, tetanus and typhoid. However, Central and South America carries the risks of malaria and dengue fever. Rabies and measles shots are also recommended.

Food and drink safety

In North America, food should be fine and tap water perfectly drinkable. But if you're off hiking, stick to bottled water.

In Central and South America the usual rules about shellfish and undercooked food apply, as does the one about avoiding tap water. Again, wash and peel fruits and vegetables. And avoid dairy products and food sold on street stalls.

How your pharmacist can help

If you're going on holiday, your pharmacist will be able to help you with a range of travel queries, such as what immunisation shots you might need. However, you should see your doctor well before you actually go abroad for advice on what medicines you should take with you – for instance, you need to start taking anti-malarial tablets two weeks before you go and four to six weeks after you return. If you take prescription medicines, take extra when you travel.

Over-the-counter must-haves include anti-diarrhoea tablets, pain relief and indigestion remedies, multivitamins, antihistamines, antiseptic, sun protection cream, calamine lotion and water sterilisation tablets – all of which are available from your pharmacist.

Finally, don't risk a sexually transmitted infection or an unwanted pregnancy – make sure you take a supply of condoms with you.

Essentials to take

- Sunscreen
- Anti-fungal creams and powders
- Insect repellent
- Aspirin or paracetamol
- Anti-diarrhoea tablets
- If you're travelling to Central or South America, a preventative course of antibiotics to treat gut infections may prove useful. Check with your doctor beforehand



Vaccinations and preventative treatments

There's a lot to look out for, especially if you're visiting India. Protect yourself against the following: diphtheria, tetanus, polio, malaria, meningococcal meningitis, hepatitis A & B, typhoid, Japanese B encephalitis, rabies, tuberculosis and yellow fever.

Food and drink safety

Modify your diet gradually. Vegetables and fruit should be washed in bottled or purified water. Avoid shellfish and any meat, especially mince that appears undercooked.

Be careful of the water, especially ice. If you can't purify your water, drink bottled water and soft drinks, but make sure bottle seals haven't been tampered with. Take care with fruit juice (water may have been added) and with milk, which should be boiled beforehand.

Essentials to take

- Anti-malaria tablets
- Aspirin or paracetamol
- Antihistamines

- Water purification or iodine tablets
- Antibiotics (advisable if you're trekking)
- Anti-diarrhoea tablets
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Anti-fungal creams and powders
- Antiseptic
- Multivitamins



Vaccinations and preventative treatments

You don't need any vaccinations to visit Australia – except for yellow fever if you're travelling from an infected country. But again, it's wise to keep up to date with the routine jabs, such as diphtheria, polio and tetanus. Hepatitis A and B are also advisable. However, you do need anti-malaria prevention for some South Pacific islands, such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Food and drink safety

With a few exceptions, the tap water is safe to drink. Bore water – from underground sources – in some of the more remote towns may be unfit for consumption. In these cases, drink bottled water or, if none is available, use the stored rainwater that the locals drink. Beware of natural sources, such as brooks and streams. Filter, boil or purify any water collected this way.

Essentials to take

- Sunscreen
- Anti-diarrhoea tablets
- Antihistamines
- Insect repellent



Vaccinations and preventative treatments

Like many other places, no jabs are specifically required for Europe, unless you're coming from a high-risk country.

However, making sure you've had your boosters if you need them is always a good idea. Furthermore, if you haven't done so already, get yourself immunised against hepatitis A and B.

Food and drink safety

Tap water is safe throughout the whole of Europe. However, if you're ever in doubt about the quality, buy bottled water.

Again, unpasteurised milk and undercooked food are both no-no's.

Essentials to take

- Aspirin or paracetamol
- Anti-diarrhoea tablets
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

For more advice

- **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**
Travel Advice Call 020 7008 0232
- **British Airways Travel Clinic** Go to www.britishairways.com/travelclinics
- **Hospital for Tropical Diseases** Call 020 7387 9300 or go to www.thehtd.org
- **Department of Health** Call 020 7210 4850 or go to www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice