



Know what you need before you go. Being prepared is the best way to ensure you don't take ill while on the road.

## HEALTH BEYOND BORDERS

Even a cold can seem major when you're out of the country. These five tips will help you protect your health abroad.

**Y**ou're traveling out of the country. Sure, you've reserved the hotel, made dinner reservations, bought tickets to that show you've been reading about. But have you planned for what could happen to your health abroad? Preparing for routine health problems and medical emergencies might seem a grim business when you're organizing a dream vacation or important business trip. But it's worth it. U.S. citizens headed to Asia, Africa, or Latin America for a month, for example, have a sixty to seventy-five percent chance of developing some kind of illness. Even minor problems like headaches or sniffles can seem more dire when you don't know the word for aspirin or cough drops.

No matter what your trip brings, being prepared can be a lifesaver or, at the least, offer a little peace of mind.

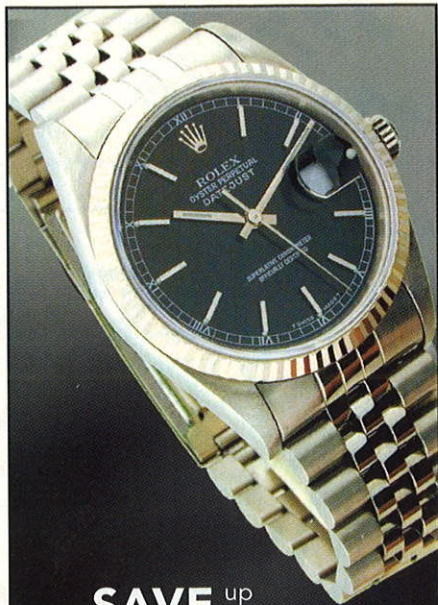
We asked several health travel experts for their advice on traveling abroad. Here's what they had to say.

**1 RESEARCH HEALTH ISSUES AND REQUIREMENTS.** Travel health organizations can give you information on immunization requirements, water and food safety, sexually transmitted diseases, climate, and environmental issues like pollution for your destination. Perhaps more important, they can also refer you to travel clinics worldwide. Two of the most helpful groups are the International Society of Travel Medicine in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT), a nonprofit organization in Guelph, Ontario. "Travel clinics, staffed by doctors and nurses, specialize in advising travelers who go overseas," says Assunta Marcolongo, president of IAMAT. "And they will check returning travelers for disease." Travel

### BY DOROTHY FOLTZ-GRAY

Health writer Dorothy Foltz-Gray's work has appeared in *Health* and *Prevention* magazines.





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## HEALTH BEYOND BORDERS

clinics evaluate where and when you are traveling as well as the medications you're on. According to Dr. Bradley A. Connor, medical director of Travel Health Services in New York, they will sometimes prevent you from taking unnecessary precautions. "For example, you may not need every vaccination on the list," says Connor. "A travel clinic will walk you through all that."

**2 DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE.** Find out if your regular policy covers you for travel abroad, says health psychologist Dr. Don R. Powell, president and CEO of the American Institute for Preventive Medicine. "If not, you can purchase health insurance for travelers through your insurance company or through most major credit card companies," he says. "If you belong to an HMO, find out what reciprocal arrangements it has for travelers."

**3 BUY EVACUATION INSURANCE.** Sign up with an evacuation insurance company or arrange for evacuation services, especially if you have a chronic health problem or are headed to a remote area. Says Connor: "Such companies usually have twenty-four-hour access and can arrange for evacuation to the nearest safe area." Insurance Services of America [800-647-4589, [www.worldwide-medical.com](http://www.worldwide-medical.com)], for example, offers \$100,000 medical coverage, \$100,000 emergency evacuation coverage, \$5,000 trip interruption coverage (should a homeland emergency abort your trip), and \$250 lost luggage coverage. Prices vary according to your age and length of trip, but for people in their forties on a two-week jaunt, such a plan would cost \$38.50.

## WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

### AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

This for-profit company publishes materials to teach consumers how to make wiser healthcare decisions.  
(800) 345-2476  
[www.aipm.healthy.net](http://www.aipm.healthy.net)

### CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

The CDC offers information on immunizations, disease outbreaks, and geographic health recommendations, and sponsors the CDC Travelers' Hotline [888-232-3228].  
(404) 639-8100  
[www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm)

### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO TRAVELERS (IAMAT)

This not-for-profit organization offers information on health risks and immunizations, as well as a directory of travel clinics and English-speaking physicians in 125 countries.  
(519) 836-0102 or (716) 754-4883  
e-mail: [iamat@sentex.net](mailto:iamat@sentex.net)

### INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF TRAVEL MEDICINE

This organization of 1,200 health professionals offers travelers free access to information about worldwide health issues and travel clinics.  
(770) 736-7060  
[www.istm.org](http://www.istm.org)

### INTERNATIONAL SOS

For a \$55 per-person fee covering fourteen days of travel, International SOS coordinates emergency care for overseas travelers. Corporate rates vary.  
(800) 523-8930  
[www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com) — D.F.G.



You'll also receive an identification card that lists a twenty-four-hour free worldwide assistance number.

### QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK

**What immunizations do I need?**

**What health supplies should I take?**

**What insurance should I have?**

**Am I at risk for malaria or other tropical diseases?**

**Is the milk pasteurized?**

**Can I drink tap water or eat raw food?**

**Are the roads bad? Do the cars have seat belts?**

**What's the climate?**

**How do I adjust timed medications like insulin to new time zones? — D.F.G.**

### 4 PACK A TRAVELER'S FIRST-AID KIT.

This might be the easiest — and most important — thing you can do for yourself before a trip abroad. Include rubbing alcohol, hydrogen peroxide for cleaning wounds, antibacterial cream, Band-Aids, gauze pads, cotton swabs, mild pain relievers such as ibuprofen, antacids, cough and cold remedies, diarrhea medication, and sunblock. "Travel clinics can prepare these for you," says Connor, "and they can supplement the kits with individual medications appropriate for you." Consider including a book that can advise you how and when to treat yourself, and when to get yourself to a doctor.

### 5 STOCK UP ON PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS.

"Take enough of your current medications to last

the trip," says Powell. "Keep them in their original containers so they're not misconstrued as illegal drugs and confiscated by Customs agents. And, if you can, carry the medications with you in case your bags get lost." Take key phone numbers. Keep health insurance cards and physician phone numbers in your wallet. III

### VITAL SIGNS: TRAVEL HEALTH

**Percent of typhoid fever cases contracted during international travel: 70**

**Most common cause of death among travelers: traffic accidents**

**Percent of travelers who contract travelers' diarrhea: 20 to 50**


**Number of times a year cruise ships must be inspected: 2**

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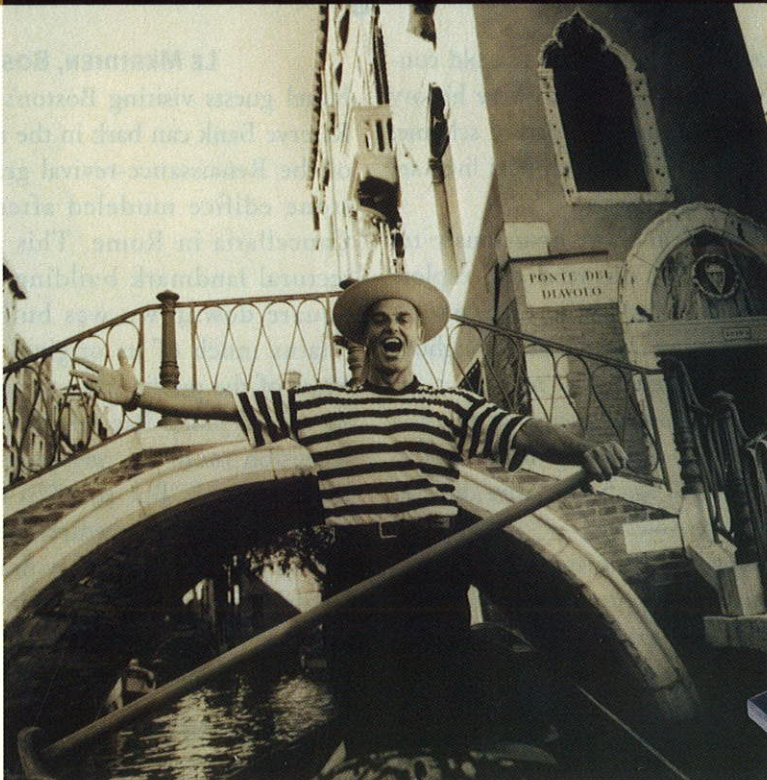
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