

Wellness Articles

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Stay Healthy While Travelling this Winter

Albertans love getting away from the cold weather. There's nothing like a sunny, warm, tropical holiday to beat the winter blues. But it's important to plan ahead before you go to ensure you stay healthy.

Visit your Doctor

Talking with your doctor should be a key step before you leave. If you are planning to travel to another country, make an appointment several months before leaving so you will have time for vaccines (immunizations) that you may require ahead of time. Ask your doctor if there are medicines or extra safety steps needed before traveling. For example, someone who has asthma may need to avoid staying in polluted cities. Or someone visiting a tropical climate may need medicine to prevent malaria. If you plan to visit an area where malaria is common, see a travel health professional at least six weeks before travel. They'll talk to you about malaria risks and inform you if you need to start medicine before your trip.

Precautions while travelling

Here are some simple tips to keep in mind while you are on your trip:

- **Water:** Before your trip, learn about the places you plan to visit. Find out if a country's tap water is safe to drink, as it can be harmful in some countries. When visiting these places, drink only beverages made with boiled water, such as tea and coffee. Canned or bottled carbonated drinks are usually a safe choice. Don't use ice if you don't know what kind of water was used to make it.
- **Food:** Trying local cuisines can be the highlight of any trip, but it's important to maintain a balance. Include a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains into your diet to ensure you are receiving essential nutrients. Be cautious of street food and choose reputable restaurants to minimize the risk of foodborne illnesses. Do not eat raw vegetables and fruits, or undercooked meat, fish, and seafood. Wash your hands thoroughly before meals and carry hand sanitizer to help prevent the spread of germs.
- **Insect Repellent:** In areas where mosquito-borne illnesses are found, use 20 to 30 per cent DEET or 20 per cent Icaridin insect repellent. Wear long

pants and long-sleeved shirts, especially from dusk to dawn. Use mosquito netting to protect yourself from bites while you sleep.

- **Driving Safety:** Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers. If you drive, be sure to learn the custom and rules. If you use hired drivers (such as in a taxi), don't be afraid to ask your driver to slow down or to drive more carefully. Use seat belts if possible.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Dehydration is common while traveling, especially while flying. Airplane cabins have low humidity levels which can lead to dry skin and mucous membranes. To combat dehydration, make sure you drink lots of water before, during, and after your flight. Avoid excessive consumption of alcohol and caffeine as they can contribute to dehydration.
- **Stay Active:** Long hours of sitting during travel can contribute to stiffness and discomfort. Incorporating stretches and light exercises during your journey will improve your circulation and reduce muscle tension. If possible, take short walks or move your body as much as possible during layovers to stay active.
- **Sun Protection:** Being in the sun can feel nice, but it's important to protect your skin from harmful UV rays that can cause skin cancer and wrinkles. Stay out of the sun during the peak hours of UV radiation from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Find shade if you need to be outdoors and wear protective clothing. Wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher every day on exposed skin including the nose, lips, ears, scalp, back of the hands, and neck. Use sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB radiation.

What happens if you become ill while travelling?

If you become seriously ill while travelling, your country's embassy or consulate can help you find medical care. For a complete list of embassies and consulates, visit <https://travel.gc.ca> for the Canadian Government's Travel and Tourism website. You can also get the contacts for local doctors and medical clinics. If you become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while travelling, seek medical attention immediately.

Should you see a doctor when you return?

If you were healthy during your trip and you feel well when you return home, you probably don't need to see a doctor.

See your doctor when you get home if either of the following occurs:

- You were sick with a fever or severe flu-like illness while travelling.
- You develop these symptoms within 1 year of coming home.

Tell your doctor the places you visited and whether you think you may have gotten a disease. Many diseases don't show up right away and some can take weeks or months to develop. Monitor how you are feeling and if there are any changes.

Have fun and be safe!

Prioritizing your health during travel is crucial for a successful and enjoyable trip. By taking proactive measures and staying informed, you can minimize health risks and fully



embrace the wonders of your destination. Remember to plan, practice good hygiene, stay hydrated, and be mindful of your well-being to ensure a safe and memorable travel experience. Safe travels!