

- Avoid swimming in polluted or contaminated water.
- Brush your teeth with bottled water.

Hand washing with soap under running water is one of the most important practices in preventing illness while travelling. Alcohol-based hand gel can be used if soap and water are not readily available, so keep some in your pocket or purse.

David and Barbara had never heard of dengue fever, an acute viral illness that's spread by infected mosquito bites. So they hadn't considered the need to take precautions while on holiday in the Caribbean. They only learned about the risk of dengue when they visited a travel health clinic for individual health assessments. Dengue is a common disease in many tropical and subtropical countries that are popular destinations for Canadian travellers.

Insect- and tick-borne diseases

Insects and ticks transmit a variety of serious infections. Mosquitoes can carry malaria, yellow fever and dengue fever; sand flies can transmit leishmaniasis; ticks can cause tick-borne encephalitis and Lyme disease; and beetles can transmit Chagas disease. Some diseases (e.g., dengue) are caused by daytime-biting mosquitoes; others (e.g., malaria) by nighttime-biting mosquitoes; and still others (e.g., West Nile fever) by both. Scorpions and biting spiders can also pose a risk to travellers in hot climates.

Your first line of protection against any insect- or tick-borne disease is to not get bitten. To reduce your exposure to insects:

- Stay in well-screened or completely enclosed air-conditioned rooms and sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net.
- Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved, tucked-in shirts, long pants, shoes (not sandals) and a hat to cover exposed skin.

