

haji; and an International Certificate of Vaccination for yellow fever is a legal requirement to enter certain countries.

You may need to start receiving your vaccination shots or taking medication six to eight weeks before you leave. Also ensure that your routine immunizations — diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella — are up-to-date. Other immunization requirements for travel will vary according to your age, existing medical conditions and the nature and duration of your travel.

If you are travelling with infants or small children, you may need to arrange an alternative or accelerated childhood immunization schedule for them. Talk to your pediatrician, family doctor or travel medicine clinic.

### **AIDS**

AIDS/HIV is a global disease. Some countries require proof of AIDS testing. Have the test conducted and obtain the results before you travel. Call Health Canada to find out if the country you plan to visit requires this documentation. When travelling, take the same precautions you do at home. Do not assume that condoms will be readily available. Even if they are, they may not meet the

safety standards set by the World Health Organization.

Remember: Using intravenous drugs is not only illegal but also extremely risky — especially if you share needles.

### **Medication**

If you take medication, be sure to pack an extra supply in case you are away for longer than expected. Carrying a duplicate of your original prescription is highly recommended — especially when travelling to a country that is particularly sensitive about drugs. Carry an extra prescription that lists both the generic and trade names of the drug, in case your medication is lost or stolen. This is also a good idea if you wear glasses or contact lenses — having the prescription makes it easier to replace them.

Do not try to save luggage space by combining medications into a single container. Keep all medications in the original, labelled container to avoid problems.

Find out whether your medication is sold in the country you are visiting. Also check to see that it is legal. Some medications that are available over-the-counter in Canada are illegal or require a prescription in other countries. Obtaining a note

from your doctor that states the medical reasons for your prescription and the recommended dosage is also encouraged. Note that doctors recommend carrying an effective antidiarrheal agent (such as IMODIUM®) because such treatments may not be available at your destination.

If you need syringes for a medical condition such as diabetes, it is very important that you take along an appropriate supply. As well, you should carry a medical certificate that shows they are for medical use.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition that could present a problem while you are travelling, it is wise to wear a MedicAlert® bracelet. Through the MedicAlert® Foundation, your vital medical facts become part of a database that can be accessed 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world. (For contact details, see "For More Information.")

### **Pregnancy**

If you are pregnant and plan to travel abroad, talk to your doctor. Some vaccinations may not be recommended. Also, check your travel and health insurance plans carefully to ensure they cover health complications arising from pregnancy.

### **On Your Return**

If you should become sick or feel unwell when you return to Canada, see your doctor. Inform the doctor, without being asked, that you have been travelling or living outside Canada, and where. Likewise, if you were ill while travelling, see your doctor on your return and explain your travel history and any treatment you received.

If you have been in a malarial area and develop fever during the first year after your return (especially in the first two months), see your doctor immediately and remind him or her that:

- antimalarial pills do not guarantee protection against malaria; and
- malaria must be ruled out by one or more thick and thin blood film examinations.

### **Supplemental Health Insurance**

Do not rely on your provincial health plan to cover costs if you get sick or are injured while you are abroad. At best, your health plan will cover only a portion of the bill. It is your responsibility to obtain and understand the terms of your supplementary insurance policies. Some credit cards offer their holders health and travel insurance. Do not assume the card alone provides adequate coverage.