

Getting Medical Advice

Your risk of acquiring a disease while travelling depends on several factors. These include your age, your current state of health and immunization status, your itinerary, the duration and style of your trip, and anticipated activities (including contact with animals, exposure to fresh water, sexual contact),

as well as the local disease situation.

Know before you go!

The Public Health Agency of Canada's Travel Medicine Program strongly recommends that your travel plans include contacting a travel medicine clinic or your physician six to eight weeks before departure.

Based on an **individual risk assessment**, a health care professional can determine your need for immunizations and medication and can advise you on what precautions to take to avoid disease while travelling. Consult the Travel Medicine Program Web site to find a travel medicine clinic close to your home.

The Canadian Society for International Health also provides information on health and travelling.

See our booklet *Bon Voyage... But* for further information on vaccinations, childhood immunization, tropical diseases, medication and AIDS.

If you wear contact lenses, consider using disposables. Storing and cleaning your lenses can become a nuisance if you're going to be on an extended journey.

It's definitely inadvisable to have ear-piercing, acupuncture, tattooing or manicures while you're on the road. Instruments that are not properly sterilized can carry hepatitis B or AIDS.

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If you absolutely must have dental work, injections or an internal

examination, contact the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate abroad. Officials there can often recommend appropriate local medical practitioners.

Consider joining the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (IAMAT). This organization provides information on immunization requirements, health and climatic conditions, tropical diseases such as malaria, food and water sanitation, and maintains a list of English-

speaking physicians around the world who have agreed to treat travellers.

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 are stored in a database that can be accessed 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world (see the "For More Information" section).

Make sure you don't leave Canada without adequate health insurance for travellers. Review your policy thoroughly so that you know exactly what your coverage entails. For example, does your policy provide an in-house worldwide emergency hotline that you can call if you're in trouble? Does the policy pay foreign hospital and related medical costs? If so, does it pay up-front or expect you to pay and be reimbursed later? Carry proof of your coverage with you.

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