

People with Special Needs

Many countries do not provide access for people in wheelchairs or make allowances for those with special hearing, sight or other physical requirements. Contact your local access organization or talk to others who have travelled to your destination in the past. There are also several guides published about international travel and people with special needs. Check your local library or bookstore or the Canadian Transportation Agency Web site (<http://www.cta-otc.gc.ca>).

Getting Medical Advice

Health Canada strongly recommends an individual risk assessment by your own family doctor or a travel medicine provider prior to travelling. Based on your health risks, vaccinations and any special precautions to take during your trip can be determined. Health Canada's Laboratory Centre for Disease Control (LCDC) provides travel health information through the Internet (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb/lcdc/osh/tmp_e.html) and through a fax retrieval system, FAXlink. To access FAXlink, call (613) 941-3900 using the handset of your fax machine and follow the instructions.

When planning to travel, it is recommended that you visit a travel clinic well before your departure. The travel clinics listed in the fold-out will ensure that you receive the most current advice, as well as any vaccinations and medications that are necessary to avoid health problems while abroad. A list of travel clinics in your area can also be obtained through Health Canada's Travel Medicine Program at (613) 957-8739, through the Internet (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>) or from the Canadian Society for International Health at (613) 241-5785.

Vaccinations

Before travelling to any destination, find out **well in advance of your trip** if you need any special vaccinations or preventive medications for such illnesses as yellow fever, typhoid, meningitis, Japanese encephalitis, hepatitis or malaria. For instance, a meningococcal vaccination is required for pilgrims travelling to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for the annual hajj; 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 at (613) 957-8739 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. Also, carry an extra prescription that lists both the generic and the 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 over-the-counter medications in Canada are illegal in other countries or require a prescription. Obtaining a note from your doctor that states