

When returning to your country of origin to visit family or friends, there are a few simple ways to stay healthy. Even if you're from the area or have been back many times, you can still get sick from a local infection.

This brochure provides valuable information and advice to help you prepare for your visit. It describes illnesses commonly found in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, along with tips on how to avoid them. It also includes important steps to take before you go, as well as a list of suggested items to put in your travelers' health kit.

We hope you find this brochure informative and helpful.
Have a safe and healthy trip.

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Before You Go

The best way to stay healthy on your visit is to plan before you go.

Do Some Research

Even if you're familiar with the area you're visiting, it's important to know the region's health risks and where to get reliable medical care. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel).

See a Doctor

See your doctor at least ***four to six weeks before your trip***. He or she will be able to tell you if you need any special shots (for diseases like yellow fever) or to take any special health precautions before you go back to your home country. It's a good idea to check that your normally scheduled vaccinations, like measles and tetanus, are up to date. Your doctor can also tell you if you need any special medication to prevent diseases like malaria.

Pack Smart

Make sure your passport, travel documents and carry-on medications are handy and not with your checked baggage. Check your airline's carry-on policies. In general, you're permitted to carry on one quart-size, clear plastic bag holding three ounce or smaller containers of liquids, gels, creams and sprays. There are some exceptions for medications.



What to Pack in Your Travelers' Health Kit

Most people returning to their home country to visit should pack a personal first-aid kit. What you include depends on how long you're going and whether you'll have access to medical care and supplies. Here's a general list of items to include:

- ✓ Insect repellent containing DEET
- ✓ Insecticide-treated bed nets for each traveler (if you're staying in a malaria-risk area with no screens or windows)
- ✓ Sunscreen
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Blanket
- ✓ Flashlight
- ✓ Hot/cold pack
- ✓ Antibacterial waterless hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) like Purell®
- ✓ Basic first aid items (e.g., band-aids, cotton, gauze pads, bandages, antiseptic ointment, thermometer, hypoallergenic tape, tweezers, scissors, latex gloves, eye patch)
- ✓ Moleskin for blisters



Talk to your doctor about which of the following medications to bring and how to take them.

- Acetaminophen, aspirin or ibuprofen for fever or pain
- Antacid
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antihistamine, decongestant and cough suppressant
- Motion sickness medication
- Anti-malaria medication, if you're visiting an area where malaria is a risk
- Mild laxative
- Antifungal ointment
- Antibacterial ointment
- 1% hydrocortisone cream
- Water purification tablets
- Throat lozenges



Staying Healthy on Your Visit

Visiting another country, even if you've lived there or visited before, can expose you to diseases and health problems not found in the United States.

Food and Water Safety

It's important to watch what you eat and drink in other countries. Even though it may be difficult to do when visiting family or friends, it can help prevent travelers' diarrhea and more serious conditions such as hepatitis A and typhoid fever.

Watch what you eat. The general rule is: **Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it.**

Remember these tips:

- Stick to fruits and vegetables that you can peel yourself.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and dairy products.
- Don't buy food from street vendors.
- Avoid raw or undercooked meat, fish and shellfish.

Don't drink water that's not filtered.

Keep the following tips in mind:

- Avoid tap water in all forms, including ice.
- Always use bottled or boiled water, even to brush your teeth.
- Beware of fruits and vegetables that may have been washed in contaminated water.
- Feel free to drink canned or bottled drinks in their original containers—including water, carbonated beverages, beer or wine—as long as you break the seals on the containers yourself.
- If it's not possible to buy bottled water or to boil water, consider bringing a portable water filter to purify water.



Follow these additional tips. Here are other ways to avoid a food-borne illness:

- Wash your hands with soap and water or an antibacterial waterless hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol), such as Purell®, before eating or preparing food, after using the bathroom and after contact with animals.
- Boil water and cook food to 185°F (85°C) for at least one minute.



Preventing Mosquito Bites

If you're going to a tropical area, you may be at risk for malaria, dengue fever or other mosquito-borne infections. They can be prevented with these simple precautions:

- Use insect repellent with DEET on both skin and clothing.
- Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and a hat outside.
- Sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net if you're staying somewhere without screens or windows.
- Get rid of standing water. Empty out buckets, old tires or anything else that holds water.



Common Travel Illnesses

Food- and Water-Borne

Many infectious diseases such as travelers' diarrhea, hepatitis A and typhoid fever are caused by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water.

Travelers' Diarrhea

Travelers' diarrhea is the most common health problem among travelers. Symptoms include loose or watery stool, bloating, nausea, stomach cramping and fever.

See Food and Water Safety on page 6 for prevention tips.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is a virus that affects your liver. It is common in developing countries where sanitation and hygiene are poor. Symptoms usually start about 30 days after being infected but you can get sick anywhere from 15 to 50 days after you were infected. Symptoms include extreme fatigue, fever, loss of appetite, nausea, stomach pain, dark colored urine and jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes).

If you're traveling to a country where hepatitis A is common, be sure to get the hepatitis A vaccine **at least two to four weeks before you depart.**

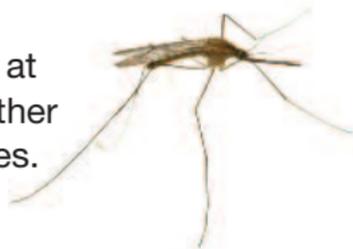
Typhoid Fever

Typhoid fever can be a life-threatening infection of the intestines. Symptoms usually start between eight and 14 days after eating or drinking contaminated food or water, but you can get sick from three to more than 60 days after being infected. Symptoms include high fever, headache, diarrhea, constipation, loss of appetite and a rash of rose-colored spots.

It's important to be vaccinated against typhoid fever if you're planning a trip to an area where the disease is common. Since the vaccine may not always be completely effective, be sure to follow the prevention tips under Food and Water Safety on page 6.

Mosquito-Related

Travelers to tropical areas may be at risk for malaria, dengue fever or other infections spread by mosquito bites.



Malaria

Malaria is a serious, life-threatening disease spread by mosquitoes. It strikes more than 500 million people each year, with more than one million dying from it. Symptoms usually occur a few weeks to a few months after being bitten by an infected mosquito. They include fever, chills, headache, muscle pain and tiredness. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also occur.

If you're going to a malaria-risk area, visit your doctor **four to six weeks before you go** for medication to prevent malaria. To make sure it works, you'll have to start the medicine before you leave and continue it for a short time when you come back. Be sure to take it on time without missing doses. Remember, even if you're taking anti-malaria medication, it's still important to prevent mosquito bites. See Preventing Mosquito Bites on page 8 for more information.

If you develop fever and flu-like symptoms (chills, headache, fatigue, muscle aches) while traveling in a malaria-risk area or up to one year after coming home, seek immediate medical care. Be sure to tell your doctor where you were traveling.

Dengue Fever

Dengue fever is a disease spread by mosquitoes. It affects between 50 and 100 million people every year. Symptoms generally occur three to 14 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. They include flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches, as well as vomiting and eye pain. A rash may also appear. Since there is no vaccine or treatment for dengue fever, it's important to follow the tips under Preventing Mosquito Bites on page 8.

Yellow Fever

Yellow fever is a rare disease transmitted through a mosquito bite. Symptoms usually occur three to six days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. It can cause severe flu-like symptoms, such as fever, chills, headache, backache, muscle pains, exhaustion, jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes) and vomiting.

If you're traveling to an area where yellow fever is common, you are required to be vaccinated at an approved yellow fever vaccination clinic **at least 10 days before you depart**. After receiving the vaccine, you will receive an International Certificate of Vaccination (yellow card) validated by the vaccination clinic. You may need this card as proof that you've been vaccinated to enter or leave certain infected areas. For a travel clinic near you, visit [cdc.gov/travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel).

Animal-Related

When traveling outside the United States, you can get sick from animal bites or from contact with animal fluids or feces, or by eating food made from infected animals, particularly meat and dairy products. Rabies, avian influenza (bird flu) and other illnesses are spread through contact with animals or animal products.

Rabies

Rabies is usually passed to humans through the bite of an infected animal. Dog bites account for most human rabies cases, but bats and other animals can also carry rabies. Rabies can be fatal, and kills more than 55,000 people worldwide each year. In humans, symptoms usually occur 30 to 90 days after the bite. They start with a flu-like illness and move quickly to neurological symptoms and death.

It can be hard to tell if an animal has rabies. Therefore, if an animal bites or scratches you, wash the area with soap and water and **see a doctor right away** to see if you need rabies shots.

Rabies Precautions

There are several ways to reduce your risk of rabies infection.

- Avoid close contact with or feeding wild, captive or domestic animals, especially in developing countries.
- Ask your doctor if you need rabies shots before you go.
- If you're traveling with a pet, make sure your pet's rabies vaccinations are up to date.

Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

Avian influenza, also known as bird flu, is a virus transmitted through contact with infected poultry or birds. People rarely get sick from the virus. However, since 2003, more than 400 people in Africa, the Middle East and Asia have died after having close contact with infected birds. Symptoms usually start between two and eight days after you're infected. They include fever, headache, body aches, cough and stomach pains. If you have flu-like symptoms or have difficulty breathing within 10 days of returning from a high-risk area, see your doctor right away. Tell your doctor where you traveled and if you had contact with poultry.

Reducing Your Risk of Bird Flu

Here are some tips to help you avoid avian flu:

- Avoid close contact with live poultry, such as chickens or turkeys, and wild birds.
- Avoid surfaces that might have bird waste or secretions on them.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use an antibacterial waterless hand sanitizer like Purell®.

Person-to-Person

There are several infections, such as the flu and meningococcal disease that are spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing and direct contact.

Influenza (Flu)

The flu is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. Symptoms include fever, cough, aches and sore throat. Some people can get very sick with the flu—especially children, people over 65 years of age or those with certain long-term health conditions that make the flu more dangerous.

The risk for the flu depends on the time of year and where you're going. In the tropics, influenza can occur throughout the year, while in the temperate climates of the Southern Hemisphere, it occurs from April through September. In the Northern Hemisphere, the flu generally occurs from October through April.

How to Prevent the Flu

- Get a flu shot every year as early as you can. It's important to get one if you're over 50 years of age, live with or care for young children, pregnant or have health conditions that make the flu more dangerous, such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or a weakened immune system. Children 6 months to 18 years of age should also get a flu shot.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. If you don't have a tissue, use your sleeve or the inside of your elbow.

Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease can cause meningitis (an infection of the fluid around the spinal cord and brain). It is usually spread through coughing or kissing. Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, bad headache, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, rash, sensitivity to light, confusion and sleepiness.

If you're traveling to an area where the disease is common, such as Africa, or if you're going on the Hajj, it's important to get the meningococcal vaccine ***at least two weeks before you depart.***

Meningococcal disease is potentially life threatening if not treated right away. If you develop a sudden fever and any of the symptoms above, seek immediate medical care.

Ways to Avoid Meningococcal Disease

- Ask your doctor about the meningococcal vaccine before you leave.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap, or use an antibacterial, waterless hand sanitizer like Purell®.
- Don't share drinking glasses, utensils, toothbrushes, water bottles, cigarettes, lip balms or other items that touch your mouth.



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Editorial

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For more information on travel health, call **311**
or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
at **1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)**, anytime,
day or night, or visit **cdc.gov/travel** or **travel.state.gov**.

For information on a variety of health topics,
visit **nyc.gov/health**.