

TRAVEL ADVICE LEAFLET

Wetmore Road Surgery

This leaflet is designed to remind you of some of the information the nurse gave you when you visited for your travel appointment. **PLEASE READ IT!** The information will help you to stay healthy on your trip.

WATER

Diseases can be caught from drinking contaminated water, or swimming in it. Unless you KNOW the water supply is safe where you are staying, ONLY USE (in order of preference)

1. Boiled water
2. Bottled water or canned drinks
3. Water treated by a sterilising agent

This includes ICE CUBES in drinks and water for CLEANING YOUR TEETH.

SWIMMING

It is safer to swim in water that is well chlorinated. If you are travelling to Africa, South America or some parts of the Caribbean, AVOID SWIMMING in fresh water LAKES and STREAMS. You can catch a parasitic disease called SCHISTOSOMIASIS from such places. This disease is also known as BILHARZIA. It is wise NEVER TO GO BAREFOOT, but to wear protective footwear when out, even on the beach. Other diseases can be caught from sand and soil, particularly wet soil.

FOOD

Contaminated food is the commonest source of many diseases abroad. You can help prevent it by following these guidelines:

- ONLY EAT WELL COOKED FRESH FOOD
- AVOID LEFTOVERS and REHEATED FOODS
- ENSURE MEAT IS THOROUGHLY COOKED
- EAT COOKED VEGETABLES, AVOID SALADS
- ONLY EAT FRUIT YOU CAN PEEL
- NEVER DRINK UNPASTEURISED MILK
- AVOID ICE-CREAM and SHELLFISH
- AVOID BUYING FOOD FROM STREET VENDOR'S STALLS

Another source of calories is ALCOHOL! If you drink to excess, alcohol could lead you to become carefree and ignore these precautions.

Two phrases to help you remember

1. COOK IT, PEEL IT, OR LEAVE IT!
2. WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT!

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Many diseases are transmitted by what is known as the 'faecal-oral' route. To help prevent this, always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, before eating and before handling food.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

This is the MOST COMMON ILLNESS that you will be exposed to abroad and there is NO VACCINE AGAINST IT! Traveller's diarrhoea is caused by eating/drinking food and water contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites. Risk of illness is higher in some countries than others.

High risk areas include North Africa, Sub Saharan Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, S.E. Asia, South America, Mexico and the Middle East.

Medium risk areas include the northern Mediterranean, Canary Islands and the Caribbean Islands.

Low risk areas include North America, Western Europe and Australia.

You can certainly help PREVENT traveller's diarrhoea in the way you BEHAVE – make sure you follow the food, water and personal hygiene guidelines already given.

Traveller's diarrhoea is 4 or more loose stools in a 24 hour period often accompanied by stomach pains, cramps and vomiting. It usually lasts 2-4 days and whilst it is not a life threatening illness, it can disrupt your life for several days. The main danger of the illness is DEHYDRATION, and this, if very severe, can kill if it is not treated. Treatment is therefore REHYDRATION. In severe cases and particularly in young children and the elderly, commercially prepared rehydration solution is extremely useful. This can be bought in a tablet or sachet form at a chemist e.g. *dioralyte* or *electrolade* (*dioralyte relief* is a new formula containing rice powder which help to relieve the diarrhoea, particularly useful in children. Prepare according to the instructions.

Anti-diarrhoeal tablets can be used for adults but should never be used in children under 4 years of age and only on prescription for children ages 4-12 years. Commonly used tablets are *immodium* and *lomotil*. **None of these tablets should ever be used if the person has a temperature or blood in the stool.**

DO CONTACT MEDICAL HELP IF THE AFFECTED PERSON HAS:

- A temperature
- Blood in the diarrhoea
- Diarrhoea for more than 48 hours (24 hours in children)
- Becomes confused

In very special circumstances, antibiotics are used for diarrhoea, but this decision should only be made by a doctor.

(A woman taking the oral contraceptive pill may not have full contraceptive protection if she has diarrhoea and vomiting. Extra precautions must be used – refer to your "pill" information leaflet. If using condoms, use products with the British Kite Mark.)

HEPATITIS B AND HIV INFECTION

These diseases can be transmitted by

1. Blood transfusion
2. Medical procedures with non sterile equipment
3. Sharing of needles (e.g. tattooing, body piercing, acupuncture and drug abuse)
4. Sexual contact (this can also spread other sexually transmitted diseases)

WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Only accept a blood transfusion when essential
- If travelling to a developing country, take a sterile medical kit
- Avoid procedures e.g. body piercing, tattooing, acupuncture
- Avoid casual sex, especially without using condoms

REMEMBER – excessive alcohol can make you carefree and lead you to take risks you otherwise would not consider.

INSECT BITES

Mosquitoes, certain types of flies, ticks and bugs can cause many different diseases, e.g. malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever. Some bite at night, some during the daytime.

AVOID BEING BITTEN BY:

- Covering up skin as much as possible if going out at night. (mosquitoes that transmit malaria bite from dusk until dawn). Wear light coloured clothes, long sleeves, trousers or long skirts.
- Use insect repellents on exposed skin. (Choose those containing DEET or eucalyptus oil base. A content of approximately 50% DEET is recommended for tropical destinations.) Clothes can be sprayed with repellents too. Impregnated wrist and ankle bands are available. Check suitability for children on the individual products.
- If your room is not air conditioned, but screened, close shutters early evening and spray room with knockdown insecticide spray. In malarious regions, if camping, or sleeping in unprotected accommodation, always sleep under a mosquito net (impregnated with permethrin). Avoid camping near areas of stagnant water; these are common breeding areas for mosquitoes.
- Electric insecticide vaporisers are very effective as long as there are no power failures!
- Electric buzzers, garlic and vitamin B are **ineffective**.

MALARIA

If you are travelling to a malarious country, the travel nurse will have given you a separate leaflet with more details, please read it.

Remember, malaria is a serious and sometime fatal disease.

ANIMAL BITES

Rabies is present in many parts of the world. If a person develops rabies, death is 100% certain. There are 3 rules regarding rabies

1. Do not touch any animal, even dogs and cats
2. If you are licked on broken skin or bitten in a country which has rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for 5 minutes.
3. Seek medical advice immediately, even if you have been previously immunised

ACCIDENTS

Major leading causes of death in travellers are due to swimming and traffic accidents. You can help prevent them by taking the following:

PRECAUTIONARY GUIDELINES

- Avoid alcohol and food before swimming
- Never dive into water where the depth is uncertain
- Only swim in safe water, check currents, sharks, jellyfish etc.
- Avoid alcohol when driving
- Avoid hiring motorcycles and mopeds
- If hiring a car, rent a large one if possible, ensure the tyres, brakes and seat belts are in good condition
- Use reliable taxi firms, know where emergency facilities are

INSURANCE COVER

- Take out adequate insurance cover for your trip. This should possibly include medical repatriation as without it, this service if needed is extremely expensive
- If you have any pre existing medical conditions, make sure you inform the insurance company of these details and check the small print of the policy thoroughly
- If you travel to a European Union country, make sure you have obtained an E111 form before you travel

AIR TRAVEL

It is sensible on any long haul flight to

- Be comfortable in your seat
- Exercise your legs, feet and toes whilst sitting every half an hour, or take short walks whenever feasible Upper body and breathing exercises can further improve circulation
- Drink plenty of water and be sensible about alcohol intake which in excess leads to dehydration.

Further information can be obtained from the department of health website

SUN AND HEAT

Sunburn and heat-stroke cause serious problems in travellers, but in long term can be a serious cause of skin cancer. Long term damage to the skin due to sun exposure can lead to skin cancer. There is no such thing as a safe suntan (unless fake!), please take the following precautionary guidelines:

- Increase sun exposure gradually, 20 minute limit initially
- Use sun blocks of appropriate SPF strength, with a minimum of SPF 15. Children under 3 should have a minimum SPF 25 and babies under 6 months should be kept out of the sun at all times. Reapply often and always after swimming and washing. Read manufacturer's instructions.
- Wear protective clothing – sunhats,. T shirts and sunglasses etc
- Avoid going out between 11am – 3pm, when the sun's rays are strongest
- Take special care of children and those with pale skin/red hair
- Drink extra fluids in a hot climate
- Be aware that alcohol can make you dehydrated

Useful website addresses for further information:

www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

www.nathnac.org

www.dh.gov.uk

www.fco.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo

www.immunisation.nhs.uk

www.malariahotspots.co.uk