



Health Guide

Although contracting a serious illness is rare, you may experience some mild discomfort as you become accustomed to life abroad. To maximize the potential for a healthy and happy stay, follow the precautions listed in this guide and consult a public health/travel clinic for the appropriate immunizations 3-6 weeks prior to your departure.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is a key resource for up-to-date travel health information. Should you have any questions, be sure to visit the [CDC website](#) or contact the CDC Hotline at (800) 232-4636.

Please note that proof of travel insurance, with specific overseas coverage, is required by Village Volunteers prior to departure. The insurance policy should provide for direct payment to the overseas hospital and/or physician at the time of service and a 24-hour hotline access to an assistance center that can arrange medical care and determine if air ambulance services are required. For those who need to purchase travel insurance, please visit the [FAQ page](#) on our website.

Vaccinations

The following information is meant as a guide and is not comprehensive. A visit with your doctor or travel clinic is required to receive all vaccinations, medication, and health information regarding your travel abroad.

Recommended for entrance:

	Ghana	Kenya	Malawi	India	Nepal
Routine Shots	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yellow Fever	✓	Some travelers only	Some travelers only	Some travelers only	Some travelers only
Hepatitis A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Malaria	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Typhoid	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Polio (booster dose)		✓			
Meningococcal (Meningitis)	✓ If traveling during dry season	✓ If traveling during dry season			
Rabies	Some travelers only	Some travelers only	Some travelers only	Some travelers only	Some travelers only
Japanese Encephalitis				Some travelers only	Some travelers only
Hepatitis B	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Malaria

Malaria is a viral disease transmitted through the bite of a mosquito and is a serious risk in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, India and Nepal. Malaria symptoms may begin with a fever and flu-like symptoms (e.g. chills, headaches, body aches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea). Symptoms generally appear within 7-30 days but can take up to one year to develop.

Travelers can protect themselves from malaria by taking prescription medicine and preventing mosquito bites. Talk to your doctor about the available medications you can take to prevent malaria. Follow your doctor's instructions regarding how long to continue taking your drug after your return. If you become ill with a fever or flu-like illness, either while traveling in a malaria-risk area or after your return home (for up to one year), you should seek immediate medical attention and should tell your health care provider about your travel history.

Antimalarial Drugs

Please consult with a travel doctor about which antimalarial drug is appropriate for you based on your travels. We highly recommend that you purchase your antimalarial drugs before you travel. Drugs purchased overseas may not be manufactured according to United States standards and may not be as effective. They may also be dangerous, contain counterfeit medications or contaminants.

Important Reminders

As a traveler, you will potentially be at risk for exposure to bacteria, viruses and parasites. Be sure to note the following:

- The biggest risk for disease is from contaminated food and water, which may cause traveler's diarrhea (TD). Symptoms of TD include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramping and fever. These can be alleviated by drinking water or re-hydration solutions to help replace lost fluids and electrolytes. TD is fairly common for travelers, but if symptoms persist or are especially severe, antibiotics may be recommended at the discretion of a healthcare professional.
- Protect yourself from mosquito and other insect bites to prevent the following diseases: malaria, dengue fever, filarasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis (Ghana/Kenya), African trypanosomiasis (Ghana/Kenya), and Japanese encephalitis (India/Nepal).
- All travelers should take measures to prevent both daytime and nighttime insect bites:
 - Pay special attention to mosquito protection between dusk and dawn. This is when the type of mosquito whose bite transmits malaria is most active.
 - Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
 - Apply DEET-containing insect repellent to exposed skin. Do not put repellent on wounds or broken skin, and do not breathe in, swallow, or get DEET into your eyes. DEET is toxic if swallowed. If using a spray product,

apply DEET to you face by spraying your hands and rubbing the product carefully over your face, avoiding your eyes and mouth.

- Apply insecticide (permethrin) to spray clothing and gear.
- Use permethrin-treated bed net while sleeping.
- Tuck your mosquito net around the edges of your bedding before sunset.
- Cover mattresses and sleeping mats with a nylon tarp or poncho to keep out fleas and bed bugs.
- Do not swim in fresh water. Swimming in fresh water lakes and rivers can lead to parasitic infections, such as schistosomiasis, a fresh water parasitic fluke with a complex life cycle. The only protection for this disease is prevention. Swimming should be avoided unless in a chlorinated swimming pool.
- Water used for cleansing a wound should be boiled first and left to cool, or iodized first.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry and do not go barefoot anywhere. Also, note that hookworms contaminate the soil of many remote areas.
- Be careful when people cough around you; they may be carrying tuberculosis or other infectious diseases. Try to stay in well-ventilated areas.
- Avoid animal bites and serious disease (including rabies and plague) by not handling animals, especially monkeys, dogs and cats.
- Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) has been found in poultry populations in several countries. Avoid direct contact with birds, including domestic poultry (such as chickens and ducks) and wild birds. Avoid places such as poultry farms and bird markets where live birds are raised or kept.
- If you visit the Himalayan Mountains or Mount Kilimanjaro, prevent altitude illness and sunburn. Ascend gradually to allow time for your body to adjust to the high altitude, which can cause insomnia, headaches, nausea and altitude illness. If you experience these symptoms, descend to a lower altitude and seek medical attention. Untreated altitude illness can be fatal. Use and regularly apply sun block rated at least 30 SPF, especially at high altitudes, where the risk of sunburn is great.

Food and Water Safety

There are a few precautions that travelers should follow to minimize their risk of contracting food-borne illnesses while in rural area. While your hosts are aware of food and water safety rules, this knowledge will serve you well.

Purifying Water

Boiling is by far the most reliable method for purifying water. Water should be brought to a vigorous rolling boil for at least 1 minute and allowed to cool at room temperature; ice should not be added. After the boiled water cools, it should be poured into a clean bottle. This procedure will kill bacteria and parasitic causes of diarrhea at all altitudes and viruses at low altitudes. Adding a pinch of salt to each quart, or pouring the water from one clean container to another, will improve the

taste. It is also recommended that travelers take a personal water filter and water purification tablets.

Dehydration

Dehydration means your body has insufficient water and fluids. Not drinking enough water or fluids, or losing too much fluid through vomiting and diarrhea, are common causes. Dehydration is classified as mild, moderate, or severe based on how much of the body's fluid is lost or not replenished. When severe, dehydration is a life-threatening emergency. Symptoms include dry or sticky mouth, low urine output, concentrated urine that appears dark yellow, and sunken eyes.

Drinking fluids is usually a sufficient treatment for mild dehydration. It is better to have frequent, small amounts of fluid rather than trying to force large amounts of liquid at one time. Drinking too much fluid at once can bring on more vomiting. Electrolyte solutions are also recommended, and are available at pharmacies. When dehydration is recognized and treated promptly, recovery is generally successful.

Reminders for Staying Healthy

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand gel (with at least 60% alcohol).
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Wipe cans and bottles dry of potentially contaminated water, especially the area of the container where your mouth will touch.
- Avoid tap water, fountain drinks and ice cubes. Although a restaurant might offer safe bottled beverages, the ice is probably made from tap or untreated water.
- Avoid popsicles and flavored ices that may have been made with contaminated water.
- Carbonated beverages are generally safe if served in a bottle. Beware of "home-bottled" beverages sold from cars.
- Be careful with fruit juices, as water may have been added.
- Milk is often unpasteurized. Drink only milk that has been boiled or is in hot tea.
- Locally based beverages might be considered unsafe to drink even if they are bottled. This may include beer or other drinks made from cool or cold water strained from grains that are untreated.
- Use purified water when brushing your teeth – you will inevitably swallow some. Keep your toothbrush in a clean, closed container.
- Keep your mouth closed while bathing – begin practicing before you leave.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables that have been peeled. When you eat raw fruits and vegetables that can be peeled, peel them yourself. Wash your hands with soap first and do not eat the peelings.
- Remember: Boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- Do not consume food or beverages purchased at roadside vendors.

- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat or seafood. Generally, meat that has been fried, boiled, or steamed is considered safe. Eat foods that are still hot and steaming.
- Avoid shellfish such as mussels, oysters, and clams. Steaming does not make shellfish safe for eating.
- Do not eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized or boiled.
- Do not consume ice cream that is sold in the streets or that might have melted and been refrozen.
- Local-style food is usually safer than Western-style food because it is cooked much longer (sometimes all day) and the ingredients are fresh.

Health and Medical Supplies

We highly recommend that you bring a personal medical kit that can be left in the village when you depart. A complete list of traditional and alternative medical supplies can be found in the *Packing Guide* document.