

# Travel Advice Document – High Field Surgery

This information will help you to stay healthy on your trip.  
**PLEASE READ THIS CAREFULLY**

## **WATER**

Diseases can be caught from drinking contaminated water, or swimming in it. Unless you know the water supply is safe, only use (in order of preference)

- Boiled water
- Bottled water or canned drinks
- Water treated by a sterilising agent

This included 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 call 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 foods
- 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*

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

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

## **TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA**

This is the most common illness that you will be exposed to abroad and there is not vaccine against it! Travellers' diarrhoea is caused by eating and/or 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, SE 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 help prevent **travellers' diarrhoea** in the way you behave – make sure you follow the food, water and personal hygiene guidelines already given.

Travellers' diarrhoea is 4 or more loose stools in a 24 hour period often accompanied by stomach pain, cramps and vomiting. It usually lasts 2-4 days and whilst it is not a life threatening illness, it can disrupt your trip for several days.

The main danger is **dehydration** and this, if very severe, can kill 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 tablets or sachet form at a chemist **eg Dioralyte or Electrolade**. 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 aged 4-12 years. Commonly used tablets are Imodium 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 (or 24 hours in children)
- Become 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 protection if she has had 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

- Blood transfusion
- Medical procedures with non sterile equipment

- Sharing needles (eg tattooing, body piercing, acupuncture and drug abuse)
- Sexual contact. Sexually transmitted diseases can also be transmitted

### Ways to protect yourself

- Only accept a blood transfusion when essential
- If travelling to a developing country, take a sterile medical kit
- Avoid procedures et ear or body piercing, tattooing and 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 eg malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever. Some bite at night, but some during 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.

### **MALARIA**

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

**REMEMBER, malaria is a serious and sometimes 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

- Do not touch any animal, even dogs and cats
- 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
- 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 certain
- Only swim in safe water, check current, sharks, jellyfish etc

- Avoid alcohol when driving, especially at night
- 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 (including a photocopy of the original form). The E111 form is in the T6 leaflet and after completion, should be stamped at the Post Office. Additional travel insurance is still advised.

## **AIR TRAVEL**

It is sensible on any long haul flight to

- Be comfortable in your seat
- Exercise your legs, feet and toes while sitting every half hour or so and 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 detailed below with more specific advice and information on travel-related deep vein thrombosis.

## **SUN AND HEAT**

Sunburn and heat stroke cause serious problems in travellers. Both are preventable – to avoid, use the following precautionary guidelines

- Increase sun exposure gradually, 20 minutes limit initially
- Use sun blocks of appropriate adequate “SPF” strength (see table below). Reapply often and always after swimming and washing. Read manufacturers instructions.

Suggested minimum and maximum protection factors for different skin types and destinations

	<b>UK / Northern Europe</b>	<b>Mediterranean</b>	<b>The Tropics / Africa</b>
Children/ sensitive skin	SPF 10 – 15	SPF 15 – 20	SPF 20 – 25
Fair skin	SPF 6 – 10	SPF 10 – 15	SPF 15 - 20
Normal skin	SPF 4 – 8	SPF 6 – 10	SPF 10 - 15
Olive/Dark Skin	SPF 2 - 6	SPF 4 – 8	SPF 6 - 10

- Wear protective clothing – sunhats etc
- Avoid going out between 11 am and 3 pm, 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

The Foreign Office provides a travel advice information service on CEEFAX page 470 (BBC2)

### **TRAVEL ON THE INTERNET**

With increased use of the internet, travel health information is available in abundance. It is always wise to use well validated sites that keep their information updated regularly. Certain recommendations for appropriate vaccines are specific to the country of the origin, therefore for this information it is wise to use UK based sites.

### **Travel related internet sites**

- **Fit for Travel** – an NHS site write at the Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental health  
[www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk)
- **Department of Health**  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAdviceToTravellers/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAdviceToTravellers/fs/en)
- **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**  
[www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)
- **Department of Health Advice on Travel Related Deep Vein Thrombosis**  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/BloodSafety/DVT/DVTArticle/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/BloodSafety/DVT/DVTArticle/fs/en) ?CONTENT\_id=4071438&CHK=20T7NG
- **Yellow Fever Centres in the UK**

[www.info.doh.gov.uk/doh/yellcode.nfs/pages/Home?open](http://www.info.doh.gov.uk/doh/yellcode.nfs/pages/Home?open) or go to

- **National Travel Health Network and Centre**  
[www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org)
- **Medical Advice Services for Travellers Abroad**  
[www.masta.org](http://www.masta.org)
- **UK Travel Health site developed by a nurse**  
[www.travelhealth.co.uk](http://www.travelhealth.co.uk)
- British Airways for information pre and during flights, fear of flying courses, fitness to fly regulations etc

### **Good Books For The Traveller**

Some are excellent for the profession travel health adviser as well. This list represents a very small selection of the vast number of books now available these days

- **Travellers' Health – How to Stay Healthy Abroad**  
Devised and edited by Dr Richard Dawood. 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford University Press, 2002,  
ISBN 0-19- 262947-6 Price £14.95
- **Understanding Travel and Holiday Health**  
By Dr Gil Lea and Bernadette Carroll, Family Doctor Publication Ltd in association with the British Medical Association  
ISBN 1-898205-93-0 Price £3.50
- **Bugs, Bites and Bowels**  
By Dr Jane Wilson Howarth. Cadogan books, London 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2002  
ISBN 1-86011-868-2 Price - £9.99
- **Before You Go – The Ultimate guide to Planning your Gapyear**  
By Tom Griffiths. Aspects Guides 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2002  
ISBN 1-904-012-01-9 Price £7.99
- **Your Child's Health Abroad – A Manual for Travelling Parents**  
By Dr Jane Wilson-Howarth and Dr Matthew Ellis. Bradt Publications UK 1998  
ISBN 1-8983230-63-1 Price £8.95
- **The Royal Geographical Society Expedition Medicine**  
Edited by David Warrell and Sarah Anderson. Publishers – Profile Books (1998)  
ISBN 1-86197-040-4 Price £17.99
- **Stress-Free Flying**  
By Robert Bor, Jannete Josse and Stephen Palmer. Quay Books, Mark Allen Publishing Ltd  
ISBN 1-85642-167-8 (2000)

- **The Travellers' Good Health Guide**  
By Ted Lankester, Interhealth. Sheldon press 1999  
From [suppliers@interhealth.org.uk](mailto:suppliers@interhealth.org.uk) or 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8US Price  
£6.99
- **Picture Talk**  
Langenscheidt Publications Inc ISBN 0-88729-191-0 Price £3.99
- **The Rough Guide to Travel Health**  
By Dr Nick Jones, Rough Guides Ltd  
ISBN 1-85828-570-4 Price £4.99
- **Everything you need to know before you go – Information and advice for independent travel**  
By Mark Ashton. Abroadsheet Publications 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1998  
ISBN 0-9525128-2-3 Price £3.50