Pre-departure planning

By preparing yourself with knowledge, common sense & some preventative measures, you can have a healthy, safe & memorable trip abroad

*A traveler’s motto: you’re not at home!*

► Be advised once you leave the US, everything changes: customs, laws, goods & services, don’t assume anything.

*There’s more to travel health than just shots!*

**Reviewing the risks:**

► Climate: sun, heat, cold, altitude

► Time zones: jet lag

► Food/water: traveler’s diarrhea

► Transportation: motion sickness, DVT (deep vein thrombosis)

► Diseases: malaria, dengue fever, various parasites, measles, MERS, ebola, yellow fever, hepatitis b, etc.

► Other environmental hazards

► Sexual health (STD’s/ pregnancy)

► Personal safety/crime

► If you are arrested for any reason, ask to notify the closest Embassy/Consulate (do not sign anything or admit guilt)
A healthy traveler’s checklist:

- Do some research about your destination (culture, laws, language, accommodations, available services, etc.)
- Get any necessary vaccinations
- Get a medical/dental exam (particularly for extended trips >2 months)
- Obtain an adequate supplies of any prescription medications
- Get a medical alert bracelet as appropriate (diabetes, allergies, etc.)
- Purchase an extra set of eye glasses or contacts
- Compile a travel first aid kit
- Check your health insurance for international coverage/purchase additional coverage as needed
- Plan to visit a travel medicine clinic at least 6-8 weeks prior to departure
- Choose a clinic that specializes in travel medicine
Visiting a travel medicine clinic

► During your visit to the travel medicine clinic, a qualified healthcare professional will discuss with you tips & recommendations for you on various risks such as climate, time zones, food/water, transportation, diseases, other environmental hazards, sexual health, and personal safety/crime.

► This advice will be based on the details of your personal history & your trip such as: medical history (diabetes, heart disease, pregnancy, age, etc.), destination country/region: rural vs urban, duration of trip, season of travel, purpose of travel (business, tourism, visiting friends/family, pilgrimage, relief work, etc.), travel style (tour group/ independent), accommodations (luxury hotel, backpacking across the alps, etc.), recreational activities (water sports, high altitude climbing, etc.)

► Travel medicine clinic currently available in Williamsport through the Hospital's Infectious Disease Department:

700 High Street, 6th floor

570-321-2181
Vaccinations

There are three types of vaccinations: routine, required & recommended.

► Routine:
These include immunizations most Americans receive routinely, typically in childhood
► MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
► Varicella (chickenpox)
► Tetanus
► Diphtheria
► Hepatitis B
► Polio
► meningitis

► Remember the traveler’s motto: you’re not at home! Not all countries have the same access to healthcare so routine vaccine preventable diseases we no longer see in the US may still occur regularly in other countries. Make sure all routine vaccines are up-to-date.

► Required:
► Proof of immunization is required to enter some countries:
► Yellow fever (can only be obtained through a travel medicine clinic)
► Meningitis (pilgrims participating in the Hajj & Umra pilgrimages in Saudi Arabia)

► Recommended:
► These are vaccinations that may be recommended to you based on the details of your personal history & your trip
► Influenza
► Japanese Encephalitis
► Typhoid
► Hepatitis A
► Rabies
► Pneumococcal

Not all insurance cover the cost of the above vaccines as travel is often considered a luxury not a necessity.
**Sun & Heat exposure**

- most sun & heat issues are a results of too much/too soon- ease into your exposure to sun & heat

- Prevention:
  - Avoid direct sunlight between 11 am & 3 pm (**note: you can get burned even when not directly in the sun or if it is overcast**)  
  - Use a sunscreen of at least SPF 15, apply 30 minutes before sun exposure, reapply after swimming/excessive sweating & every few hours  
  - Wear sunglasses/hat/protective clothing against the sun; wear loose –fitting/ light colored cotton/ linen clothing to help your body stay cool in high heat  
  - The most significant threat against sun/heat is dehydration, drink plenty of fluids (**note: avoid alcoholic & caffeinated beverages in large quantities**)  
  - Some medications can increase skin sensitivity to the sun such as some anti-malaria drugs & some antibiotics as well as others- check with your healthcare provider
**High Altitudes**

- People react differently to changes in altitude. Symptoms for altitude sickness can range from mild to serious, even fatal. People traveling to altitudes above 8,000-10,000 feet are at most risk of altitude sickness. Those with pre-existing heart/lung conditions are also at increased risk.

- Prevention strategies:
  - Don’t fly or drive to a high altitude if possible
  - Make your ascent gradual
  - Do not over-exert yourself
  - Drink plenty of fluids (avoid alcohol)
  - If you experience moderate symptoms do not climb higher until symptoms improve, if symptoms increase descend
  - Some medications can be used prophylactically- talk with your doctor
Jet lag

Jet lag is a temporary sleep disorder that can affect anyone who travels across multiple time zones (typically at least 3).

Symptoms may include:
- insomnia, daytime fatigue, difficulty concentrating, diarrhea/constipation,
- generally not feeling well, muscle aches, menstrual irregularities

Prevention tips:
- when possible, break up your trip: one day rest for every 6 time zones crossed
- schedule important commitments 24 hours after arrival
- get plenty of rest before your trip
- gradually adjust your schedule before you leave
- once you arrive stay on your new schedule (don’t sleep until local bedtime)
- regulate bright light (traveling east: wear sunglasses & avoid bright light in the morning: west: avoid bright light a few hours before dark)
- melatonin (to reset your body clock to an earlier time/after flying east, take melatonin in the evening; to reset to a later time/after flying west, take in the morning).
- prescription medications
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Deep vein thrombosis is a blood clot (usually a leg, sometimes an arm) in a deep vein. This is a serious, potentially fatal condition. Sitting for 4 or more hours decreases the blood flow in your extremities & increases your risk for a DVT (your risk remains elevated for several weeks after travel). Those at increased risk for developing a DVT include: previous blood clot, known clotting disorder, recent surgery, use of estrogen-containing birth control or hormone replacement therapy, older age, obesity, active cancer, limited mobility, pregnancy, and smoking.

Prevention tips:
- Getting up & walk around every 30 minutes
- Exercising your calf muscles & stretching your legs while you're sitting (raise & lower heels while keeping toes on the floor /raise & lower toes while keeping heels on the floor.
- Tightening and releasing your leg muscles.
- Those at higher risk may also wish to talk to their doctor about wearing properly fitted medical compression stockings and/or taking medication before departure to prevent DVT.
Motion sickness

Choose a seat where you will experience the least motion: the middle of an airplane over the wing/on a ship cabins in lower levels near the center of a ship.

►Prevention tips:
☆ Do not sit facing backwards from your direction of travel.
☆ Sit in the front seat of a car.
☆ Do not read while traveling if you are prone to motion sickness.
☆ When traveling by car or boat, keep your gaze fixed on the horizon or on a fixed point.
☆ Open a vent or source of fresh air if possible
☆ Stimulating your other senses may provide distraction & help: aromatherapy (mint or lavender), ginger candy, or other flavored lozenges may help.
☆ Eat dry crackers/ drink a carbonated beverage to help settle your stomach if you become ill
☆ Take over the counter medication (Dramamine)
☆ Talk to your doctor about a prescription anti-emetic (nausea)
Understanding how disease is spread

► person to person
► insects
► food/water
► soil/recreational water

**Person to person transmission**

► Some illnesses are spread by direct contact with other people or shared objects, examples include Influenza, Measles, SARS, Mumps, Meningitis, HIV, Ebola, etc.

► Prevention:
  - ⭐ HANDWASHING!!!!!!!
  - ⭐ Vaccination

**Insects**

► Insects can include ticks, mosquitoes, roundworms, fleas, chiggers, etc. & can simply be annoying or can cause serious diseases such as Malaria, Yellow fever & Japanese encephalitis.

► Prevention:
  - √ avoid being outdoors at night
  - √ avoid scented soap/deodorant, etc.
  - √ wear protective clothing (long sleeves/pants) & don’t forget your feet (no sandals)
  - √ use insect repellant (DEET containing- 20-35%)
  - √ treat clothing/bed nets with the insecticide permethrin
  - √ use sleeping nets
  - √ get vaccinated as appropriate
  - √ prophylactic medications as appropriate (malaria
Contaminated food or water can do more than simply give you a bad case of diarrhea. Serious illnesses such as Hepatitis A, Typhoid & Cholera can be transmitted via food/water.

**prevention:**
- √ eat food that has been cooked recently, thoroughly & served HOT
- √ avoid raw fruits & veggies, eat fresh fruits/veggies you peel yourself (wash before peeling)
- √ avoid un-pasteurized milk/dairy products (including cheese)
- √ avoid street vendor food
- √ drink water, sodas, or sports drinks that are bottled and sealed (carbonated is safer)
- √ drink water that has been disinfected (boiled, filtered, treated)
- √ drink HOT coffee or tea
- √ DO NOT drink tap or well water
- √ DO NOT drink Fountain drinks
- √ DO NOT use Ice made with tap or well water
- √ DO NOT use drinks made with tap or well water (such as reconstituted juice)
- √ bathing is fine but do not use tap/well water to brush your teeth

Soil & Recreational water:

► Parasites & other organisms live in sand, soil & water are often able to enter
the body even through unbroken skin

► prevention tips:
☆ avoid direct contact with contaminated soil
☆ always wear protective footwear - even on the beach
☆ avoid tall grass, especially at night (snakes/scorpions)
☆ update vaccinations (tetanus booster within last 10 years)
☆ Don’t swallow water you are in.
☆ Don’t swim with open cuts, abrasions, or wounds.
☆ Don’t swim if you have diarrhea.
☆ Don’t swim in cloudy water.
☆ Be careful about swimming/ wading in fresh water in some countries due to parasites
☆ Learn about risks of local sea animals (such as urchins, jellyfish, coral, sea lice)
☆ Swim only where life guards are on duty
Sexual Health

► Sexually transmitted diseases exist at home & abroad
► understand that some countries, for a variety of reasons, have higher rates of HIV & other STD’s
► The centers for disease control reports that 20% of travelers admit to having causal sex with a new partner while abroad
► again, you’re not at home….condom availability & quality may vary- plan ahead & take a supply as necessary
► realize that human trafficking remains one of the largest criminal industries in the world- use caution!

Preparing for illness while traveling

► Ensure you are in good health prior to departure, if you do become ill, check with your doctor to make sure it is safe to travel
► check your insurance coverage to see if it will cover overseas
► consider purchasing additional health insurance if your plan will not cover you while traveling
► consider purchasing medical evacuation insurance
► set aside funds for medical expenses while away; you may need to pay out-of-pocket even if your plan provides coverage
► In the event you do become sick/injured while traveling, a few items from home can help ease the situation
► Remember our motto: you’re not at home, common products available in the US may not be as accessible overseas & although some products may be the same/similar compared to the US it may be labeled differently making it difficult to determine WHAT you are actually using
Travel first aid kit

√ thermometer  (Celsius vs Fahrenheit)
√ common over the counter medications:
  ∙ Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Advil (ibuprofen)
  ∙ cold medications (decongestants, antihistamines, cough medicine)
  ∙ anti-diarrhea medication (imodium)
  ∙ anti-nausea/motion sickness drugs (Dramamine, emetrol)
  ∙ hydrocortisone cream
  ∙ antibacterial cream
  ∙ vaginal yeast cream
√ band-aides (various sizes)
√ antiseptic wipes
√ hand sanitizer
√ scissors, tweezers, safety pins
√ insect repellant
√ sunscreen
√ latex condoms

Prescription medications:

► ensure you have an adequate supply of prescription drugs for the duration of your trip- again you’re not at home & may not be able to refill medicine overseas
► ensure all medications are clearly labeled (in original container if possible to include your name, your doctor’s name & the name of the drug)
► if you are taking certain prescriptions you may need to have a letter of authorization from your doctor indicating you require the drug for personal use
► determine if your destination country has any specific restrictions on prescription drugs
► consult with TSA regarding regulations/amounts of liquid medications
Getting healthcare abroad

► The quality of healthcare overseas can be variable depending on the country. Treatment options may also differ from what individuals are familiar & accustomed to in the US.
► US citizens who become seriously ill or injured abroad may contact the local US consulate office for assistance in accessing care as well as notifying family back home (* note payment of care is the responsibility of the traveler).

Safety

► use the same safety precautions abroad as you would at home
► use common sense
► be aware of your surroundings
► make copies of your passport, driver’s license, credit cards (copy at home, copy in luggage, copy on your person)
► register your trip with the state department (www.state.gov/travel)
► know about the country you are visiting (the do’s & don’ts)
► respect the culture & customs of the country you are visiting
► choose clothing that is conservative/modest (particularly women) so as not to offend or draw attention
► minimize jewelry (real or costume)
Safety

► do not travel with large sums of cash, consider credit cards, pre-paid visa, traveler’s checks, etc.
► wear seatbelts
► use only authorized taxis
► don’t take along anything you can’t live without in case it disappears
► lock doors in hotel rooms & in vehicles to protect persons & property
► keep a low profile, be careful what info you share with foreigners
► avoid civil disturbances, do not participate in demonstrations
► when traveling, individuals are subject to the laws of the country being visited & can be arrested for something considered legal or only a minor offense in the US

Returning home

► Once you return home pay attention to your health
► If you are not feeling well see a healthcare provider
► share your history of recent travel abroad (*note some diseases-malaria- can take up to 1 year to manifest)