

PARISH NURSES NOTES – MAY 2024

Your Survival Guide to Safe and Healthy Travel

Wherever your travels may take you, be prepared when it comes to your health before, during, and after travel.

Before You Go

Take these steps to prepare for your travels aboard and anticipate issues that might arise.

Check your destination for country-specific [health risks](#) and [safety concerns](#). You should also know your health status before you make travel plans. When you are sick, you can spread diseases to others. Postpone your travel and stay home when you are sick.

Make an appointment with your [health care provider](#) to get destination-specific vaccines, medicines, and advice at least a month before you leave. Discuss your itinerary and any planned activities with your provider so that he or she can make customized recommendations to ensure a healthy and safe journey.

Make sure you are up-to-date on all of your routine vaccines, including measles-mumps-rubella (MMR). Measles and other infectious diseases can spread quickly in a large group of unvaccinated people.

Plan for unexpected health and travel issues. Find out if your health insurance covers medical care abroad—many plans don't! Make sure you have a plan to [get care overseas](#), in case you need it. Consider buying [travel insurance](#) that covers health care and emergency evacuation, especially if you will be traveling to remote areas.

Prepare for emergencies. Leave copies of important travel documents (e.g. itinerary, contact information, credit cards, passport, proof of school enrollment) with someone at home, in case you lose them during travel. Make sure someone at home knows how to reach you in an emergency and carry your emergency contacts with you at all times.

Enroll with the Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP). Monitor [travel warnings](#) for your destination. Enrolling also ensures that the [US Department of State](#) knows where you are if you have serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties while traveling. In the event of an emergency at home, STEP can also help friends and family contact you.

Pack smart. Prepare a [travel health kit](#) with items you may need, especially those that are difficult to find on your trip.

- Fill your travel health kit with your prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines (enough to last your whole trip, plus a little extra), a first aid kit, [insect repellent](#), [sunscreen](#) (SPF15 or higher), aloe, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, water disinfection tablets, and your health insurance card.
- Please visit the [Traveling Abroad with Medicine](#) for more information.

During Your Trip

Choose safe transportation. Always wear a seat belt, and children should ride in car seats. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among healthy travelers. Be alert when crossing the street, especially in countries where people drive on the left side of the road. [Find out other steps](#) you can take to stay safe on the roads.

Avoid bug bites. Use [insect repellent](#) and take other steps to avoid bug bites. Bugs, including mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, and flies, can spread diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, Zika, dengue, chikungunya, and Lyme. These bugs are typically more active during warm weather.

If you or a travel companion gets an injury or sickness that can't be helped with basic first aid or an over-the-counter medicine, seek medical attention right away. Visit [Getting Health Care During Travel](#) to learn how to connect with a doctor or medical services during your trip.

Choose safe food and drink. Contaminated food or drinks can cause [travelers' diarrhea](#) and other diseases and disrupt your travel. Travelers to low or middle income [destinations](#) are especially at risk. Generally, foods served hot are usually safe to eat as well as dry and packaged foods. Bottled, canned, and hot drinks are usually safe to drink. Learn more about how to choose safer [food and drinks](#) to prevent getting sick.

Protect yourself from the sun. Apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher when traveling. [Protecting yourself from the sun](#) isn't just for tropical beaches—you can get a sunburn even if it's cloudy or cold. You are at the highest risk for UV exposure when you are traveling during summer months, near the equator, at high altitudes, or between 10 am to 4 pm.

Wash your hands. Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

Be safe around animals. [Avoid animals](#), including pets, local farm animals, and wild animals. In addition to the risk of rabies, all animal bites carry a risk of bacterial infection.

Be careful during water activities. Drowning is a major cause of death when traveling. Follow [water safety recommendations](#), which includes swimming, boating and diving, especially in countries where emergency services may not be quickly available.

After Travel



If you traveled and feel sick, particularly if you have a fever, talk to a healthcare provider and tell them about your travel.

If you need medical care abroad, see [Getting Health Care During Travel](#).