

Travel advice for children and families

Most travel-related health problems can be prevented by visiting your doctor ideally two months prior to travel for advice regarding immunisations, travel medicines and safety precautions. This is particularly important for travel to developing or tropical countries. For safety recommendations for specific countries, refer to smartraveller.gov.au and ensure you have travel health insurance before you leave.

It is important to discuss with your doctor before travelling:

- Your medical and immunisation history
- Timing, location (including city or rural), duration and season of travel
- Planned activities during travel (e.g. visiting farms or animals, water activities)
- Places you will stay during travel (e.g. hotel, visiting friends and family)

What if my child has a health condition, and we want to travel overseas?

- It is important to plan ahead: discuss with your treating specialist/doctor for advice regarding risk and suitability for travel.
- Prior to travel, make sure you have all the medication you may need and enough supply of regular medication for the duration of the trip: some countries have limited supply and fake medication may be an issue.
- Take medication in its original pharmacy packaging, along with a copy of the prescription and a letter from the prescriber detailing a medication list and reason for the medication. Medication should be carried in hand luggage, with an extra supply in checked-in luggage.
- Travelers who require syringes to administer medication, should carry those syringes along with a letter from a healthcare provider documenting a medical need for the syringes.

Travel Immunisations: It is important children are up to date with routine immunisations on the WA immunisation schedule. Additional travel immunisations may be recommended, depending on the area of travel. Discuss with your doctor for further advice.

Food and water precautions: Travellers are at risk of infection from consumption of unclean food or water (e.g. travellers' diarrhoea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever). Water and food precautions are important to reduce the risk of infection. Hand washing with soap and water after visiting the toilet, and before preparing or eating food is important. Alcohol gel may be helpful after hand-washing (applied to dry hands) and when hand-washing facilities are not available.

Water precautions

- ✓ Boil water for three minutes, followed by cooling, to sterilise (clean) the water for drinking.
- ✓ Filtration devices or chemical disinfection agents (e.g. chlorine tablets) may be used to clean water for drinking, when boiling water is not available.
- × Do not drink or brush teeth with unboiled tap water or consume ice made from unboiled tap water.
- × Be wary of locally bottled water, other carbonated drinks are probably safer.



Food precautions

- ✓ Eat fresh, well-cooked food
- ✓ Eat fruit that can be peeled by yourself (e.g. bananas and oranges)
- ✓ Eat only pasteurised dairy products such as yoghurts, milk and cheese (check the food label)
- × Avoid salads and uncooked (raw) fruit and vegetables
- × Do not eat food that is left uncovered in warm environments e.g. buffet or street trader food
- × Avoid raw or undercooked meat, fish or shellfish, including oysters.

Insect and tick bite precautions

In some areas, insects (mosquitoes, flies, fleas) and arachnids (ticks and mites) can spread potentially serious infections. The risk varies depending on the area of travel. Discuss with your doctor for specific advice. Some important things you can do to lower your risk of infection include:

- Before travelling, buy a **DEET containing insect repellent** to bring with you (this is considered the most effective insect repellent product)
- Wear protective light-coloured clothing, including long-sleeved shirts and pants
- Use mosquito netting (permethrin treated is preferred) over your bed
- Where possible, minimize time spent outdoors, particularly at dusk and dawn
- Avoid using products with strong perfume (e.g. soaps) which might attract insects

How to use DEET containing insect repellent

DEET is recommended and should be used in concentrations of at least 30% and is safe up to 50% in pregnant and breastfeeding women and children older than two months of age.

- Ensure repellent is not ingested or inhaled; do not apply directly to the face – apply repellent to hands, then to the face to avoid contact with lips and eyes. Wash hands after application.
- Do not apply to young children's fingers/hands (who may place them into their mouth).
- Apply and re-apply repellents according to manufacturers' instructions.
- When both sunscreen and DEET containing insect repellent are needed, apply 30-50 SPF sunscreen FIRST and then DEET containing insect repellent after.

Malaria prevention

Malaria is a serious infection that is spread by infected mosquitoes, present in certain parts of the world. Antimalarial medications may be recommended, as well as general measures for avoiding insect bites listed above; discuss with your doctor for further advice.

Other travel precautions

Open water, soil, and sand can contain infection-causing organisms in some areas of the world. In general, wear shoes that cover your feet completely. In countries where schistosomiasis (a water parasitic infection) is common, travellers should avoid swimming in fresh water; check if this is a risk with your doctor. Travellers or returning travellers with a fever (temperature above 38 degrees) or other concerning symptoms should seek prompt medical review.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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