



## 8 WEEKS TO GO: General health advice for British travellers

There is no such thing as risk free travel, whether you are away for a few months or just a few days. Even something as simple as slipping by the side of the pool, or sipping a cocktail could ruin your holiday by putting you at risk of an infectious disease.

The good news is that you can reduce your risk by taking a few simple precautions before you go and while you're away.

Here are some handy tips and advice to help you enjoy healthy travel:

- Make an appointment with your GP surgery or travel health clinic / pharmacy 6-8 weeks before overseas travel for personal, up-to-date, expert advice. You may need a course of vaccinations and medications, which can take several weeks to complete to ensure that you have adequate protection. This will also give you enough time to buy any other items that you may need for your trip.
- Your healthcare professional can advise you on all aspects of travel health so that you are familiar with the specific health risks in the country you are visiting. The following website offers more information on credible websites to use for your own research: [www.8weekstogo.co.uk](http://www.8weekstogo.co.uk).
- Unless you know that the water supply is safe, use only boiled or bottled water or water treated with sterilising agents – this includes ice-cubes in your drinks and water for cleaning your teeth.
- Contaminated food is the most common source of many diseases abroad. Only eat well-cooked fresh food. Meat must be thoroughly cooked, you should avoid salads as you will not know if they have been washed in uncontaminated water, and only eat fruit that you can peel.
- Sunburn and heat stroke cause serious problems for travellers. Keep out of the midday sun, keep well hydrated and make sure you use a high-factor sun cream.
- Avoid insect bites, which can cause many different diseases, by wearing long sleeved clothing, using a repellent containing up to 50% DEET (which should be applied frequently to exposed skin) and taking other bite prevention measures.
- Avoid unprotected sex, ear and body piercing, tattooing



and acupunctures when you're away to help avoid serious diseases such as hepatitis B and HIV infection. It's wise to take a sterile medical kit if you are travelling to a resource poor country.

- Take sensible precautions on the roads:
  - never drink and drive
  - if you're hiring a vehicle, avoid motor cycles and mopeds
- Avoid contact with local animals as they may carry rabies.
- Ensure you have enough prescription medicine for your trip and carry it in your hand luggage.
- Take out medical insurance and obtain a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for free medical care within the EU.
- Follow the advice of your healthcare professional before and during your travels and make sure you speak to you GP if you feel unwell on your return.

**This information has been provided by the *8 Weeks To Go* campaign, a national campaign developed and funded by GlaxoSmithKline Travel Health, in association with Fit For Travel® ([www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk)), the Royal College of Nursing and a partner of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's *Know Before You Go* travel advice campaign. The *8 Weeks To Go* campaign aims to educate British travellers about the importance of seeking expert health advice before overseas travel.**

