

Health Tips

Eastern Shore Rural Health System, Inc.

"More than Just a Doctor's Office"

EXOTIC TRAVEL? PLAN TO PREVENT ILLNESS

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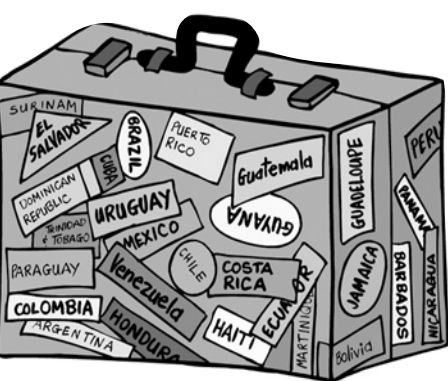
Eastern Shore Rural Health Systems



Travel to exotic locations around the world is now commonplace. Should you seek medical advice from a foreign travel medical expert before planning an international trip? The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that for every 100,000 persons traveling overseas: (1) 50,000 of these people will develop some medical problem, (2) 5,000 will become ill enough to need bed rest, (3) 300 will be admitted to a hospital, (4) 50 will require an emergency evacuation by air for a serious illness, and (5) one person will die as a consequence of illness complications. Many of these illnesses are preventable either through immunizations or preventive medications.

A pre-departure consultation with a foreign travel medical expert needs to be done at least four weeks prior to travel, as some vaccines require a month to provide full protection from the specific disease.

What vaccines will you need for this exotic trip? Vaccine recommendations are specific to the area you are traveling and given by the CDC. These immunization recommendations can be



accessed via the internet at the CDC's website (www.cdc.gov). Click on Traveler's Health.

Traveler's diarrhea is one of the most common illnesses acquired by persons going overseas. Approximately 30 to 60 percent of those traveling to developing nations will have traveler's diarrhea. Diarrhea can be a symptom of vaccine preventable illnesses such as Hepatitis A, typhoid, and polio. Bacteria such as E coli and Salmonella, treatable with antibiotics, as well as viruses and parasites can also cause uncomfortable intestinal symptoms. These infections are acquired by ingesting contaminated food and water. As well as receiving recommended vaccines and medications, using precautions to prevent your contact with contaminated food and water is the best policy. Having over-the-counter medications to stop diarrhea in your traveling medicine chest is also advised.

Whether traveling or not, everyone who has had a primary series of the tetanus and diphtheria vaccine should receive a tetanus-diphtheria toxoid (Td) booster every 10 years. For travelers, a Td booster is recommended, especially for those going to developing countries and Eastern Europe, where an outbreak of diphtheria has been occurring in recent years.

Precautions against diseases carried by insects are also recommended for foreign travel. Malaria is carried by anopheles mosquitoes. It is the most important parasitic disease threat faced by travelers in most tropical and subtropical countries. No vaccination is currently available for malaria. Several preventive medications for malaria are available by prescription. Taking these medications is not a 100% guarantee that you will not develop malaria if exposed, but it is very effective when combined with wearing protective clothing and using insect repellent.

Eastern Shore Rural Health Systems offers a foreign travel clinical service where prospective travelers can receive counseling and immunizations recommended for travel to their destination. This service is offered on Tuesdays from 10 am to 2 pm at the Franktown Community Health Center. Please call Sandy Heflin at 757-414-0400 ext. 125 to schedule an appointment.



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