

PARSONS HEATH MEDICAL PRACTICE  
TRAVEL ADVICE LEAFLET

This leaflet is designed to remind you of some of the information the nurse gave you when you visited for your travel appointment. **PLEASE READ IT!**  
The information will help you to stay healthy on your trip.

**WATER**

Diseases can be caught from drinking contaminated water, or swimming in it.

Unless you **KNOW** the water supply is safe where you are staying **ONLY USE** (in order of preference)

1. Boiled water
2. Bottled water or canned drinks
3. Water treated by a sterilising agent

This includes **ICE CUBES** in drinks and water for **CLEANING YOUR TEETH**.

**SWIMMING**

It is safer to swim in water that is well chlorinated. If you are travelling to Africa, South America or some parts of the Caribbean, **AVOID SWIMMING** in fresh water **LAKES** and **STREAMS**.

You can catch a parasitic disease called **SCHISTOSOMIASIS** from such places. This disease is also known as **BILHARZIA**. It is wise **NEVER TO**

**GO BAREFOOT**, but to wear protective footwear when out, even on the beach. Other diseases can be caught from sand and soil, particularly wet soil.

**FOOD**

Contaminated food is the commonest source of many diseases abroad. You can help prevent it by following these guidelines:

- **ONLY EAT WELL COOKED FRESH FOOD**
- **AVOID LEFTOVERS & REHEATED FOODS**
- **ENSURE MEAT IS THOROUGHLY COOKED**
- **EAT COOKED VEGETABLES, AVOID SALADS**
- **ONLY EAT FRUIT YOU CAN PEEL**
- **NEVER DRINK UNPASTEURISED MILK**
- **AVOID ICECREAM & SHELLFISH**
- **AVOID BUYING FOOD FROM STREET VENDORS' STALLS**

Another source of calories is **ALCOHOL!** If you drink to excess, alcohol could lead you to become carefree and ignore these precautions.

Two phrases to help you remember

1. **COOK IT, PEEL IT, OR LEAVE IT**
2. **WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT.**

## PERSONAL HYGIENE

Many diseases are transmitted by what is known as the 'faecal-oral' route. To help prevent this, always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, before eating and before handling food.

## TRAVELLERS' DIARRHOEA

This is the **MOST COMMON ILLNESS** that you will be exposed to abroad and there is **NO VACCINE AGAINST IT!**

Travellers' diarrhoea is caused by eating and/or drinking food and water contaminated by bacteria, viruses or

parasites. Risk of illness is higher in some countries than others.

High risk areas include North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, SE Asia, South America, Mexico and the Middle East.

Medium risk areas include the northern Mediterranean, Canary Islands and the Caribbean Islands.

Low risk areas include North America, Western Europe and Australia

You can certainly help **PREVENT** travellers' diarrhoea in the way you **BEHAVE** - make sure you follow the food, water and personal hygiene guidelines already given.

Travellers' diarrhoea is 4 or more loose stools in a 24 hour period, often accompanied by stomach pain, cramps and vomiting. It usually lasts 2-4 days and, whilst it is not a life threatening illness, it can disrupt your trip for several days. The main danger of the illness is **DEHYDRATION** and this, if very severe, can kill if it is not treated. **TREATMENT** is therefore **REHYDRATION**. In severe cases and particularly in young children and the elderly, commercially prepared rehydration solution is extremely useful. This can be bought in tablet or sachet form at a chemist shop, e.g. DIORALYTE, or ELECTROLADE. (Dioralyte Relief is a new formula containing rice powder, which also helps to relieve the diarrhoea, particularly useful in children). Prepare according to instructions.

**ANTI-DIARRHOEAL TABLETS** can be used for adults but should **NEVER** be **USED** in children under 4 years of age and only on prescription for children aged 4 to 12 years.

Commonly used tablets are IMODIUM and LOMOTIL.

*None of these tablets should ever be used if the person has a temperature or blood in the stool.*

## DO CONTACT MEDICAL HELP IF THE AFFECTED PERSON HAS

- A temperature
- Blood in the diarrhoea
- Diarrhoea for more than 48 hours (or 24 hours in children).
- Becomes confused

In very special circumstances antibiotics are used for diarrhoea, but this decision should only be made by a doctor. (A woman taking the oral contraceptive pill may not have full contraceptive protection if she has had diarrhoea and vomiting. Extra precautions must be used - refer to your 'pill' information leaflet. If using condoms, use products with the British Kite Mark).

## HEPATITIS B and HIV INFECTION

These diseases can be transmitted by

- 1) Blood transfusion
- 2) Medical procedures with non-sterile equipment
- 3) Sharing of needles (e.g., tattooing, body piercing, acupuncture and drug abuse)
- 4) Sexual contact. - (Sexually transmitted diseases are also transmitted by no 4)

## WAYS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- 1) Only accept a blood transfusion when essential
- 2) If travelling to a developing country, take a sterile medical kit.
- 3) Avoid procedures, e.g. ear, body piercing, tattooing and acupuncture
- 4) Avoid casual sex, especially without using condoms

**REMEMBER-** excessive alcohol can make you carefree and lead you to take risks you otherwise would not consider

## INSECT BITES

Mosquitoes, certain types of flies, ticks and bugs can cause many different diseases, e.g. malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever.

Some bite at night, but some during daytime.

## AVOID BEING BITTEN BY:

- Covering up skin as much as possible if going out at night, (mosquitoes that transmit malaria bite from dusk till dawn). Wear light coloured clothes, long sleeves, trousers or long skirts.
- Use insect repellents (containing **DEET** or eucalyptus oil base) on exposed skin. Clothes can be sprayed with repellents too. Impregnated wrist and ankle bands are also available. Check suitability for children on the individual products
- If room is not air-conditioned, but screened, close shutters early evening and spray room with knockdown insecticide spray. In malarious regions, if camping or sleeping in unprotected accommodation, always sleep under a mosquito net (Impregnated with permethrin). Avoid camping near areas of stagnant water; these are common breeding areas for mosquitoes, etc.
- Electric insecticide vaporisers are very effective, as long as there are no power failures!
- Electric buzzers, garlic and vitamin B are ineffective.

## MALARIA

If you are travelling to a malarious country, the travel nurse will have given you a separate leaflet with more details. Please read it.

**REMEMBER-** malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease.

## **ANIMAL BITES**

Rabies is present in many parts of the world. If a person develops rabies, death is 100% certain. There are 4 **RULES REGARDING RABIES**

- 1) Do not touch any animal, even dogs and cats
- 2) If you are licked on broken skin or bitten in a country which has rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for 5 minutes
- 3) Cleanse the wound with antiseptic, e.g. povidone iodine or, alternatively, alcohol (40-70%), whisky or gin would do if necessary.
- 4) Seek medical advice **IMMEDIATELY**

**REMEMBER-** even if you have had rabies vaccine prior to travel, if you are exposed to risk of the disease you still need to obtain post exposure treatment as soon as possible.

## **ACCIDENTS**

Major leading causes of death in travelling are due to swimming and traffic accidents. You can help prevent them by taking the following precautionary guidelines:

- Avoid alcohol and food before swimming
- Never dive into water where the depth is uncertain
- Only swim in safe water, check currents, sharks, jellyfish, etc.
- Avoid alcohol when driving, especially at night.
- Avoid hiring motorcycles and mopeds
- If hiring a car, rent a large one, if possible, ensure the tyres, brakes and seat belts are in good condition.
- Use reliable taxi firms, know where emergency facilities are.

## **INSURANCE COVER**

Take out adequate insurance cover for your trip. This should possibly include medical repatriation, as, without it, this service if needed is extremely expensive.

If you have any pre-existing medical conditions, make sure you inform the insurance company of these details and check the small print of the policy thoroughly.

If you travel to a European Union country, make sure you have obtained an E111 form before you travel (Including a photocopy of the original form). The E111 form is in the T6 leaflet and, after completion, should be stamped at the Post Office. Additional travel insurance is still advised.

## **AIR TRAVEL**

It is sensible on any long haul flight to

Be comfortable in your seat

Exercise your legs, feet and toes while sitting every half an hour or so and take short walks whenever feasible. Upper body and breathing exercises can further improve circulation.

Drink plenty of water and be sensible about alcohol intake, which, in excess, leads to dehydration.

Further information can be obtained from the Department of Health website detailed below with more specific advice and information on travel-related deep vein thrombosis.

## **SUN AND HEAT**

Sunburn and heatstroke cause serious problems in travellers.

Both are preventable -to avoid, use the following

## **PRECAUTIONARY GUIDELINES:**

Increase sun exposure gradually, 20 minutes limit initially

Use sun blocks of appropriate, adequate 'SPF' strength (see table below). Reapply often and always after swimming and washing. Read manufacturer instructions.

## **Suggested minimum and maximum protection factors for different skin types and destinations**

	UK/Northern Europe	Mediterranean	The Tropics/Africa
Children/Sensitive skin	SPF 10-15	SPF 15-20	SPF 20-25
Fair skin	SPF 6-10	SPF 10-15	SPF 15-20
Normal skin	SPF 4-8	SPF 6-10	SPF 10-15
Olive/dark skin	SPF 2-6	SPF 4-8	SPF 6-10

Wear protective clothing - sunhats, etc.

Avoid going out between 11 am and 3pm, when the sun's rays are strongest

TAKE SPECIAL CARE OF CHILDREN and those with pale skin/red hair.

Drink extra fluids in a hot climate

Be aware that alcohol can make you dehydrated

The Foreign Office provides a travel advice information service on CEEFAX page 470(BBC2)

## **Interesting website addresses:**

Scottish NHS public travel site - [fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk)

Department of Health - [www.open.gov/doh/hat/index.htm](http://www.open.gov/doh/hat/index.htm)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office - [www.fco.gov.uk.knowbeforeyougo](http://www.fco.gov.uk.knowbeforeyougo)

DOH for advice on travel related deep vein thrombosis [www.doh.gov.uk/dvt/](http://www.doh.gov.uk/dvt/)

## **Insect Bites**

### **Introduction**

Mosquitoes, sandflies, tsetse flies, and other biting insects cause much inconvenience because of local reactions to the bites themselves and from the infections they transmit. Mosquitoes spread malaria, yellow fever, dengue and Japanese B encephalitis. Mosquitoes bite at any time of day but most bites occur in the evening.

Precautions to Take

1. Avoid mosquito bites, especially after sunset. If you are out at night wear long-sleeved clothing and long trousers.
2. Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spray an insecticide or repellent on them. Insect repellents should also be used on exposed skin.
3. Spraying insecticides in the room, burning pyrethroid coils and heating insecticide impregnated tablets all help to control mosquitoes.
4. If sleeping in an unscreened room, or out of doors, a mosquito net (which should be impregnated with insecticide) is a sensible precaution. Portable, lightweight nets are available.
5. Garlic, Vitamin B and ultrasound devices do not prevent bites.

### **Choosing insect repellents**

- Insect repellents are available in various, forms and concentrations. Many skin preparations are available, mostly containing di-Ethyltoluamide (DEET).
- For those allergic to DEET, alternatives include Dimethyl Pthalate (contained in 'shoo') or Eucalyptus *oil* (contained in 'Mosiguard').
- Aerosol and pump-spray products are available which are suitable for treating clothing -if aerosols and pump sprays are used on skin:
- It is best to spray liquid onto your hand and then rub onto exposed areas.
- Liquid, creams, lotions and sticks are designed for skin application.
- Products with a lower concentration are usually used on skin and higher concentrations on clothes.

### **Using insect repellents safely**

- Clothes are the best protection -normally only use repellents on the remaining exposed areas, of skin and shirt collars and cuffs and the ankle bottoms of trousers or slacks.
- Mosquitoes can bite skin through skin-tight clothes -it is always best to wear loose fitting garments.
- Never use repellents over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- Don't apply to eyes and mouth, and apply sparingly around ears. When using sprays do not spray directly onto face; spray on hands first and then apply to face.
- Do not allow young children to handle repellents -they may get them into their eyes.
- Apply to your own hands and then to the child's skin. Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin. Heavy application is unnecessary.
- After use, wash treated skin. *This is* particularly important when repellents are used repeatedly.
- If you suspect that you or your children are reacting to an insect repellent, discontinue use, wash treated skin and then contact your doctor.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.