

Health Planning for International Travel

Builders Abroad

Southwestern College

It is important to put health care on your travel checklist if you plan to travel outside the United States. Anyone can get sick while studying and traveling abroad; it happens at home all the time. Planning ahead will help you alleviate worry.

Travel Checklist

1. **Vaccinations:** Attached to this document is a list of recommended vaccinations. Some of the vaccinations are available at the Cowley County Health Department; the others are available through the Sedgwick County Health Department. You may have to go to a travel clinic to receive vaccinations if you want to have your insurance company pay for them. Be sure to check with your insurance company for details.
2. **Medical Insurance:** All participants in Builders Abroad programs must show evidence of medical insurance coverage. Verify with your insurance carrier that your coverage will extend overseas. You need to have basic medical, accidental death, and dismemberment coverage.
3. **Special Needs:** People traveling to rural, underdeveloped areas need to be aware of their own personal health risks such as susceptibility to infection or medications that should be avoided. Check with your health care provider if you have special needs.
4. **Health Problems:** If you have a medical problem such as diabetes, bring along a health record that includes your health care provider's name and address and a summary of your medical history. It is strongly recommended that you inform your program sponsor of any existing health problems. In an emergency situation it is crucial that this information is available.

You may have difficulty getting prescriptions filled while abroad so it is best to plan ahead and have all prescriptions filled that you will need during your stay. If you are going on a short-term trip, consider taking twice the amount of prescription medications with you. If you are going on a long-term program, make plans to have your prescription filled well before your supply runs low. This is also true if you wear glasses or contacts. Bring a backup pair in case your primary pair is damaged and make sure that you have your prescription with you.

Also bring any preferred non-prescription medications with you. It is difficult to obtain American-name brands when abroad. If you think that you may need these, bring a supply of them with you so you will not have to struggle to find a foreign equivalent.

Remember tuberculosis, hepatitis, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS are a worldwide problem. In the case of HIV and STD's please be aware that the quality of prophylactics like condoms varies dramatically worldwide. As with all personal hygiene items, you should bring with you anything that you think you will need to ensure that the quality will be what you are accustomed to.

5. **Emergency Care:** Know how to locate English-speaking physicians in the countries you plan to visit. The International Association for Medical Assistance IAMAT, 738 Center Street, Lewiston, NY 14092, (Phone 716-754-4883) has information about English speaking physicians around the world, as well as information about health precautions you may need to take.
6. **Illness:** Illness is defined as not feeling well, depression, headache, stomach upsets, diarrhea, flu/common cold or any other condition that makes you feel that you would like to seek the assistance of a professional care giver.

If you encounter any illness while abroad, you must take certain steps to ensure your health. Remember, you are not at home any more. You cannot run down to the corner drug store and pick up your favorite medicine. You must think ahead and be prepared.

In the event that you become ill while abroad:

- Report any illness to your trip sponsor, local host coordinator, roommate, Southwestern College or local faculty and ask for assistance. You have every right to see a physician and should take extra care while abroad as any common illness can become major when under stress.
 - Keep receipts for any "routine" medical care, prescriptions, or other medical costs. You must have these in order to file a claim with your personal major medical insurance provider when you return to the U.S. If you are staying longer than two months you may wish to mail these receipts to your parents, family or other trusted caregivers here in the U.S. so that they can file a claim for you.
 - Make sure that you familiarize yourself with the host institution's support infrastructure on arrival. It will be something that you don't want to worry about if you do become ill or injured. To enjoy your time abroad you must be in good health. If you get a cold at home you can still function normally, but overseas you have many other strains on your system so an illness can quickly become more serious. At the first signs of illness take steps to find treatment and do not forget preventive measures. Staying warm, dry, eating properly and getting enough sleep will help your system fight off illness.
7. **Medical/Dental Examinations:** Before leaving the U.S. have a complete physical examination with your personal health care provider. Inform your health care provider of your travel plans before your appointment so that your provider

can give you current health information and medication recommendations for your destination. Dental care abroad is not recommended. Have your teeth cleaned, examined and if necessary, repaired before your departure. If you wear eyeglasses take along an extra pair. If you wear contact lenses you should take a pair of eyeglasses along in the event that you lose or damage a contact or if your eyes are irritated by dust, pollution, etc.

8. **Medical Kit:** Pack a first aid kit containing bandages, disinfectant, and an oral thermometer, as well as nonprescription items such as aspirin, Pepto-Bismol, sun screen, insect repellent, motion sickness tablets, and water purification tablets.