



# E-Bulletin



Issue 48

April 2013

The E - Bulletin is a service provided from the in-house team of physicians (Specialists, GP's & the In-house Training Center) at the **CEDARS – Jebel Ali International Hospital** in order to raise awareness about health issues.

## Traveling Without Worries



International travel continues to grow substantially every year. Not only are more travelers moving about, but they are heading to areas that have rarely been visited in the past. The travelers range in age from very young infants and small children to centenarians; they may have pre-existing medical conditions, may be immunosuppressed, or may be pregnant or contemplating pregnancy. Additionally, people travel internationally for a variety of reasons other than tourism including: business, study abroad and research programs, visiting friends and relatives, ecotourism, adventure, medical tourism, mission work, or responding to an international disaster. The infectious disease risks that travelers face are a shifting target - some travel destinations have become safer, but in others, new diseases have emerged and old ones have re-emerged.

The risk of becoming ill or injured during international travel depends on many factors, such as the region of the world visited, a traveler's age and health status, the length of the trip, and the diversity of planned activities.

## Risks from food and water

Contaminated food and water often pose a risk for travelers. Among the infectious diseases that travelers can acquire from contaminated food and water are Escherichia coli infections, shigellosis or bacillary dysentery, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, norovirus infection, hepatitis A, and salmonellosis, including typhoid fever. Contaminated food and water can also pose a risk of cholera, rotavirus infection, and a variety of conditions caused by protozoan and helminthic parasites. Many infectious diseases transmitted through food and water can be acquired directly through the fecal-oral route. Accidental ingestion or contact with recreational water from lakes, rivers, oceans, and inadequately treated swimming pools can also spread many of the above diseases, as well as some infections of the ears, eyes, skin, and respiratory or nervous systems.



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## Pre-travel health preparation



### Diseases you may encounter when traveling

- African sleeping sickness (African trypanosomiasis)
- AIDS/HIV
- Altitude illness
- Amebiasis
- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Cholera
- Dengue fever
- Diarrhea
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis
- E. coli (Escherichia coli) Encephalitis
- Giardiasis (Giardia infection)
- Hepatitis
- Influenza (flu)
- Malaria
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)
- Meningitis
- Poliomyelitis
- Rabies
- Rotavirus
- Salmonellosis (Salmonella infection)
- SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome)
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)
- Shigellosis (Shigella infection)
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Typhoid Fever
- Yellow fever



All people planning travel should become informed about the potential hazards of the countries they are traveling to and learn how to minimize any risk to their health. Forward planning, appropriate preventive measures and careful precaution can substantially reduce the risk of adverse health consequences.

Take steps to anticipate any issues that could arise during your trip.

Travel information should be obtained, including the following:

- Learn about your destination.
  - ⇒ Geographic itinerary
  - ⇒ Duration and month(s) of travel
  - ⇒ Urban travel versus rural travel
  - ⇒ Anticipated living conditions
  - ⇒ Purpose of travel
  - ⇒ Medical care resources during travel
- See a doctor before you travel
  - ⇒ Personal health status (e.g. age, weight, pregnant)
  - ⇒ Pre-existing medical conditions &

special needs

- ⇒ Medications and allergies
- ⇒ Past medical history
- ⇒ Medical or physical limitations

- Think about your health status.
  - ⇒ Are you too sick to travel? (Recent illnesses, injuries, or surgeries)
  - ⇒ Do you have any special health needs? (Babies and small children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, people with weakened immune systems)

### BE PREPARED!

No one wants to think about getting sick or hurt during a trip, but sometimes these things happen. You may not be able to prevent every illness or injury, but you can plan ahead to be able to deal with them.

- ⇒ Pack smart.
- ⇒ Plan ahead for illnesses or injuries during your trip.
- ⇒ Know what to do if you become sick or injured on your trip.
- ⇒ Know and share important information about your trip.

## Basic health travel kit

### • First Aid Items

- ◆ Insect repellent
- ◆ Sunscreen (preferably SPF 15 or greater) that has both UVA and UVB protection
- ◆ Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol
- ◆ Lubricating eye drops
- ◆ First aid quick reference card
- ◆ Basic first-aid items (bandages, gauze, ace bandage, antiseptic, tweezers, scissors, cotton-tipped applicators)
- ◆ Moleskin for blisters
- ◆ Aloe gel for sunburn
- ◆ Digital thermometer
- ◆ Oral rehydration solution packets

### • Over-the-counter medicine

- ◆ Antidiarrheal medication (for example, bismuth subsalicylate, loperamide)
- ◆ Antihistamine
- ◆ Decongestant, alone or in combination with antihistamine
- ◆ Anti-motion sickness medication
- ◆ Medicine for pain or fever (such as acetaminophen, aspirin, or ibuprofen)
- ◆ Mild laxative
- ◆ cough suppressant/expectorant
- ◆ Cough drops
- ◆ Antacid
- ◆ Antifungal and antibacterial ointments or creams
- ◆ 1% hydrocortisone cream

### • Malaria prophylaxis

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## Basic health travel kit *cont..*

### • Personal Prescription medicine

- Pack your prescription medications in your carry-on luggage.
- Pack copies of all prescriptions, including the generic names for medications.
- Pack a note on letterhead stationery from the prescribing physician for controlled substances and injectable medications.
- Leave a copy of your prescriptions at home with a friend or

relative.

- Make sure that your medicines will be allowed into the country you are visiting. Some countries do not let visitors bring certain medicines into the country.

***Do not forget your health insurance card! (Either your regular plan or supplemental travel health insurance plan and copies of claim forms)***



## Vaccination and immunization

In anticipation of upcoming travel, it is essential that one is well educated regarding the regions that will be visited and how one's current level of health may be impacted.

Vaccinations are a vital part of any preparatory process. Once the regions of anticipated travel are identified, scheduling a visit to one's doctor or a travel medicine provider is essential—ideally 4-6 weeks before the trip because most vaccinations require a period of days or weeks to become effective. Reviewing current recommendations for the region of travel is recommended prior to the scheduled medical appointment.

In addition, if uncertain regarding previous immunizations, variable tests are available to identify appropriate titer levels and whether updated boosters are indicated.

When discussing vaccinations, considering which are essential based on the region of travel and planned activities and what may be recommended is prudent.

Next to routine vaccination are MMR, DPT, Polio and BCG. Frequent travelers are recommended to have vaccination against Hepatitis A+B, Influenza, Typhoid, Chickenpox.



  
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**VACCINATION RECORD**

NAME :
PASSPORT NO.:
ADDRESS :

## Pay attention to your health during your trip

- Use sunscreen and insect repellent as directed.
- Be careful about food and water.
- Do not risk your health and safety. Limit alcohol intake, and do not drink alcohol and drive.
- Wear a seatbelt.
- Wear protective gear when doing adventure activities.
- Respect your host country and its people by following local laws and customs.



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## Traveler's Diarrhea

### What is TD?

Traveler's diarrhea (TD) affects 10 – 60% of those who travel to developing countries. This makes it the most common illness from travel. The most common symptoms are abdominal cramps, diarrhea, nausea, bloating, urgency, fever, and malaise.

### How to prevent TD?

- Be careful when choosing your food and drink.
- Eat only cooked food and fruits that can be peeled.
- Avoid food from street vendors.
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy products.
- Use purified carbonated drinks when you can.
- Drink bottled water, soda, beer, or wine.

Make sure the bottle is sealed.

- Avoid tap water and ice cubes.
- Drink liquids that can be heated (coffee, tea).
- Avoid brushing teeth with water that may be tainted.
- If you can't boil it, cook it, or peel it, then forget it.

### What to do in case of TD?

Anti-motility agents such as loperamide can be used to reduce bowel movement. Frequent replacement of lost fluids by drinking clean water is the most important means of maintaining wellness, Oral Rehydration Solutions (ORS) can be used in case of severe diarrhea.



*Always seek medical attention if the diarrhea is accompanied by blood or if you suffer from high fever.*

## The post – travel period

The most frequent health problems in ill returned travelers are persistent gastrointestinal illness, skin lesions/rashes, respiratory infections, and fever.

Although gastrointestinal upset is the most frequent problem, febrile illness is the most serious since the infection may be life threatening to the patient (malaria) or a pose a serious public health hazard (viral hemorrhagic fever). However, non-tropical entities such as respiratory or urinary tract infections account for a large proportion of febrile illnesses in returned travelers.

Certain diseases might not manifest themselves immediately on return. Some

travelers infected abroad become ill within 12 weeks after return. However, some diseases, such as malaria, may go unnoticed for as long as 6-12 months after exposure. It is therefore important that the traveler, who became ill even if it be a few months after they return home, inform their physician as to where they have traveled.

It may be prudent for asymptomatic international travelers who have been abroad for many months, to be screened for certain diseases, as recommended by their physician. ❖



### Medical Consultant for April 2013



**Dr. Marian MJ Leys**  
Occupational Health Physician

Dr. Marian Melanie Jan Leys has more than 5 years of experience as a consultant for Occupational Medicine for a variety of clients in industry and government in Belgium.

Her responsibility involves inspection visits to workplace, risk analysis and development of medical prevention programs according to the companies, research and statistical analysis of work related risk, implementation of vaccination programs and tuberculosis screening programs, diagnosis of work-related pathology, evaluation of fitness to work of employees and advice on the use of collective and personal protection.

She graduated Cum Laude of Master in Medicine from KUL University Leuven, Belgium and pursued Master after Master in Occupational Medicine at School of Public Health, KUL, Belgium also graduating as Cum Laude.

She now works at CEDARS - Jebel Ali International Hospital as Occupational Health Physician and serves as the Head of the Department of Occupational Health.

*For further information about our doctors, please call +971 4 881 4000*

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