

Tips for Staying Healthy

By Stefanie Elkins (updated June 2021)



Before the Trip

The World Health Organization recommends that all travelers, regardless of the region they are traveling in, should be updated on routine vaccinations. In addition, it is suggested for travel to the Middle East that you also get immunized for Hepatitis A and Typhoid and are up to date on your Tetanus. Check with your doctor to make sure.

Please note: The COVID-19 vaccine is REQUIRED for all tours. Most of the countries we visit are, at this time (2021) requiring vaccines for tourists.

Meds

Bring any prescription medications in their original, clearly labeled, containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing any medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is also a good idea. If you are diabetic and need to carry syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

The following is a list of other items you might want to consider packing in your personal medical kit:

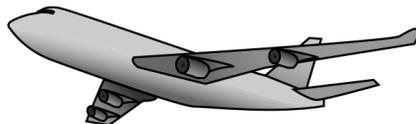
- Aspirin, Advil, Tylenol, or other anti-inflammatory drug
- Antihistamines (like Benadryl) or allergy /sinus meds (Sudafed is good if your ears get plugged on planes)
- Antibacterial cream (Neosporin, Bacitracin)
- Band-aids
- Anti-diarrheal (Imodium or Pepto)
 - You may also want to get a prescription for Cipro; most doctors will do this if you tell them you are traveling to a foreign country.
- Insect repellent
- Sun block with SPF of at least 30+
- Vitamins or other supplements
- Anti-nausea meds
- Electrolytes for dehydration (I recommend ORS powder, Gatorade powder, or Emergen-C; comes in individual packets that can be mixed with water)
- Prescription meds



Keep in mind that pharmacies are everywhere and that one can get most anything needed!

While in Transit

Everyone has his or her own personal testimony as to how one deals with jet-lag, but the truth is there is no real way to avoid it. You CAN however, lessen it and make the transition between times zones much easier, thus not risking getting sick. While some people swear by the stay-up-all-night-before-the-trip routine, this seldom works. Before the trip be sure you are well rested. Airplanes are also exceedingly dehydrating to both skin and body in general.



Stefanie's Jet-Lag Reduction Tips

- A few days before the trip start adjusting your personal clock by changing your sleep patterns to match the schedule you will need to keep while traveling overseas. This can be as simple as adjusting your bedtime accordingly.
- Reset your watch at the beginning of your trip to the local time. Psychologically this can have an amazing effect.
- Get plenty of exercise before the trip. Some people have difficulty with leg swelling and vein clots, which can be dangerous. I wear compression socks while flying and it does the trick! Taking brisk walks before the flight can help reduce soreness from sitting still for so long.
- While on the plane, get up and walk around every so often. Stretch in the aisles or in your seat.
- Drink water, drink water, and drink water. And then, drink some more water! Bring a large water bottle with you and fill it on the plane; most airlines will provide as much water as you need while on board (security may not let you on the plane with a full water bottle, even if you JUST bought it by the kiosk near the gate). Avoid caffeine as it will disrupt your already disoriented sleep schedule; besides, caffeine can dehydrate you further.
 - **The number one reason for severe jet lag is dehydration.**
- Try to sleep on the plane if at all possible. Wear headphones or earplugs and an eye mask to block out noise and light. Bring your own travel pillow.
- Eat lightly but strategically. Some people adhere to various “jet lag diets,” but I’ve never found one that was worth the trouble it took to follow it. Still, it makes sense to eat foods that support your needs and can help you avoid unnecessary “jet lag” conditions. Remember that high-protein meals are likely to keep you awake, foods high in carbohydrates promote sleep, and fatty foods may make you feel sluggish.
- There are several herbal and over-the-counter remedies available that will help boost your immune system and resist bugs if you get coughed on by plane-mates. I like Emergen-C (an intense vitamin and mineral powder you mix with water), and No-Jet-Lag (an herbal supplement that can be purchased for about \$10 through Magellans or your local vitamin shop). I personally have used this product on several international trips and noticed a difference! Some people swear by Melatonin, but it can make you groggy the next day. You may also use prescription sleep aids, but please consult your doctor about this.
- Wear comfortable clothes. I wear lightweight sweats or jogging suits. I don’t like to travel in jeans because they don’t stretch enough. Planes can get cold, so if you are one who is prone to get chilly, wear a light hoodie or jersey jacket. I also always bring socks to wear while I sleep.
- A toiletry kit, along with a change of clothes (in the event that luggage is delayed) is recommended for your carryon. Flying to the Middle East is long so you will want to consider your toothbrush and other “morning ritual” things like face cleanser, etc. I also like to take wet-wipes and lotion. Simple things like this can put you in a “morning” frame of mind even though it may be 2am where you live.
 - **Be sure that any liquids you take on the plane are UNDER 3 oz.**

During the Trip

Water

Topping the list of travel maladies is dehydration. This can be a major threat to your health and can work insidiously over days to weaken you to the point of exhaustion without your ever showing any other signs of illness. Equally, if you are sweating profusely, even the most hardy can go from alert and vigorous to dizzy and lethargic in as little as 30 minutes, due solely to loss of body fluids. It will be essential for you to carry LOTS of water with you while we are sightseeing. Water will be provided on the bus for you to purchase and there are lots of other opportunities to buy water while we are touring. We will provide one water bottle daily, but you will need more than that! You should aim for two to three liters a day and more if we are doing lots of walking. Drink more than you think you’ll need as the combination of the sun’s evaporation and your own sweating can pull water out of your body far quicker than your body can deliver thirst messages to your brain. You must drink a lot in order to avoid fatigue and splitting headaches. Avoid tap water as it will not be safe for you to drink; this includes ice cubes. Stick to bottled water to avoid “mummy tummy.”



Diarrhea

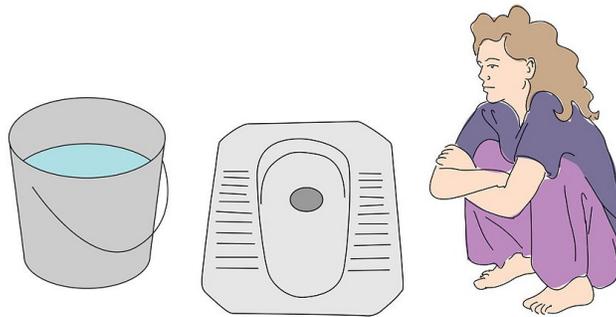
Get used to the fact that you are likely to have the trots for at least one day while we are traveling. When it happens it is best to let it run its course (literally!). Taking eight Pepto-Bismol tablets is not going to do anything except clog you up and the idea is to let all the bad stuff get out. Our food will be provided by our trusted hotels, restaurants, and an occasional food vendor that we are familiar with. However, belly issues always crop up with some due to the fact that the flora of the food you eat will just be different. 90% of all intestinal issues while traveling come not from bad food, but rather from different bacteria for which your stomach is unequipped to deal with. Yogurt, rehydration salts, Bedouin tea, and local pharmacies can provide a lot of relief. Regardless, it is advised that everyone take a good daily probiotic while we travel and have a supply of charcoal tablets handy.

Constipation

With all the bread you'll be eating, getting bunged up, the other side of the intestinal pendulum, can be as prevalent as diarrhea. Get exercise (which will not be an issue on our tour), eat lots of roughage (raw fruits, leafy vegetables, prunes, or bran tablets from home), and everything will come out all right in the end!

Toilets

The vast majority of middle eastern toilets are similar to our own, but in a few of the places we visit you might find one that consists simply of porcelain footprints and a squat-and-aim hole. If faced with one, remember: those of us who need a throne to sit on are in the minority. Throughout the world, most humans sit on their haunches and nothing more. Sometimes called "Turkish toilets," or "Squatty Pottys", these toilets usually are only equipped with an accompanying hose in which to "flush" your business. You will also notice that many bathrooms may not be well stocked with another Western essential: toilet paper. It is recommended that you carry tissue packs with you. You will also notice that all squatty pottys and many sitting style toilets have small wastebaskets adjacent to the toilet with used TP inside. Do likewise. The Middle East and many parts of Europe do not have the strong plumbing or water pressure to adequately flush paper products down the hatch. Therefore, it is best to help the sewer systems by throwing all your waste, feminine items, etc. in the trash can and not down the toilet.



Eat nutritiously

The longer the trip, the more one is affected by an inadequate diet. Travelers often eat more carbohydrates and less protein when on the road and this is particularly true for vegetarians. Get the most nutritional mileage from your protein by eating it with breakfast. In the Middle East, this means hummus, falafel, fowl (beans), eggs, and limited cheeses. We also take a daily vitamin to make up for any nutritional deficits we may face on trips abroad.

Sun Exposure

In addition to lots of water, sunblock should become your best friend while on tour! The best way to ensure a miserable trip (other than drinking Nile water) is to obtain a bad sunburn the first day out. Sunburn will raise your skin temperature and put you at further risk for heat exhaustion and heat stroke. You don't want that. Use a high, broad spectrum SPF, apply it liberally, and apply it often.

Sleep

On a tour it is tempting to stay up late chatting with friends or even with locals in order to squeeze as much out of the trip as possible. Try to avoid this as we will be having a few very early mornings! Know how much sleep you need to stay healthy. Near the end of the tour is when everyone starts to feel sleep deprived. Earplugs and a sleep mask to help with the time transition and unease of sleeping on different mattresses and different hotels can make all the difference. On a final note, the last thing I want to do is to promote an abundance of pharmaceuticals, but I have to admit that Ambien has become my traveler friend for the first few nights of a trip. However, I prefer to rely on natural supplements when possible. Use your discretion and if in doubt, consult your doctor about what might be best for you.

If at any time during the trip you are feeling over-heated, dizzy, or out-of-breath, let someone know right away.