

PACKING A MEDICAL KIT

PRE-TRAVEL PLANNING

Before you go, list all your medications and their generic names and keep this list with you in case you need to replace any of the medications. Also keep a copy of the drug information leaflets (package inserts) from the manufacturers. If you are allergic to any drugs or have a medical condition (for example, diabetes), you should carry medical alert information, preferably a Medical Alert wristband or tags listing the medical condition and/or allergies.

WHAT TO PACK FOR A SHORT TRIP TO THE TROPICS

Medications

- Analgesics (acetaminophen or aspirin). Also consider taking a stronger painkiller and anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen.
- Antidiarrheal agents such as loperamide
- Antibiotics for treating diarrhea
- Oral rehydration packets
- Antihistamine tablets for hay fever, itching, and other allergies
- Sting relief spray or hydrocortisone cream for insect bites
- Calamine lotion for sunburn and other skin rashes
- Eye drops for sore eyes
- DEET- or picaridin-containing insect repellent

Optional Medications / Supplies

- Hypnotics such as zolpidem or zopiclon for time-zone travel and jetlag
- Melatonin for time-zone travel and jetlag
- Anti-motion sickness remedies
- Soluble fiber for constipation
- Medication to prevent altitude sickness
- Condoms

Simple First Aid Kit

- Thermometer
- Scissors
- Tweezers to remove splinters and ticks
- Adhesive bandages of various sizes
- Gauze swabs and adhesive tape
- Bandages and safety pins to fasten them
- Nonadhesive dressings (such as Telfa or Melolin)
- Antiseptic powder or solution (e.g., povidone-iodine), antiseptic wipes
- Wound closure strips (steri-strips) or butterfly strips

ADDITIONS FOR LONG JOURNEYS, TREKKING, OR CAMPING

- A course of broad spectrum antibiotics for infections of the chest, ear, skin, etc.
- Antibiotics to treat cystitis and a treatment for vaginal yeast infection

- Antibiotics drops for eyes and ears
- Topical antifungal cream or powder
- Elasticized support bandage or crepe bandage
- Triangular bandage for making an arm sling
- Dental first aid kit
- Sterile kit, including needles, syringes, suture kit, intravenous cannula for IV fluids

ADDITIONS FOR HIGHLY MALARIOUS REGIONS

- Permethrin to treat clothes and bed nets
- Course of standby treatment for malaria if more than 24 hours from medical care

CARRYING MEDICINES THROUGH CUSTOMS

Customs officials can be suspicious of medications. Help to ensure that your medications are acceptable by following these recommendations:

- Keep medicines in their original packaging or container when possible.
- Obtain and carry with you a letter from your physician on letterhead stationery, appropriately signed and dated, stating your medical history and medication requirements.
- If you are a diabetic, obtain a letter from your doctor explaining why you need to carry needles and syringes. Carry this letter with you at all times.
- First aid kits, especially those with needles and syringes, should be accompanied by an official document endorsing their use as a medical kit.

TRAVELING WITH MEDICATIONS

- Keep all medications in their original containers. Use re-sealable plastic bags for storing medical supplies and place them in a waterproof and squash-proof container, such as a clear plastic box.
- Keep medicines as cool as possible and out of direct sunlight.
- Keep all medicines out of reach of babies, children, and pets.
- Carry twice as much medication as you will need, preferably split up into 2 separate bags, in case you lose one. Carry some in your hand luggage and some in the checked luggage.
- Take along copies of prescriptions for the most important drugs.
- Have all prescriptions written using generic names, since trade names vary in different parts of the world.
- If you are diabetic, see "*The Diabetic Traveler*" for tips on carrying insulin, etc.

Medicines can be dangerous if misused. For all medications, ensure that they are within their expiry date, are labeled for use, and have the drug name on the packaging.