

# Healthy Travels

## Eating Healthy While Traveling

Part of the excitement of travel is experiencing the local culinary delights of the area you are visiting. This also poses a challenge for those who want to eat healthy while traveling. There's no need to completely deny yourself these tempting pleasures; however, with a little willpower and common sense, you can navigate your way towards a healthier diet while traveling. You'll feel better, be more alert, and have more fun without the guilt!

First, let's start with breakfast. It may be a cliché that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but it's

still true while on the road. It will set you up for healthy eating for the rest of the day. Choose whole grain cereals with low-fat milk, or try eating an egg white omelet filled with vegetables instead of pancakes and syrup. A bowl of oatmeal with fresh fruit is very filling, and filled with vitamins and fiber. Yogurt and hard-boiled eggs are also good sources of protein. Forego the sugar filled muffins, sweet-rolls, and donuts offered and get whole wheat toast with a little jam instead.

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## Heat Injury and the Traveler

An often overlooked aspect of travel planning is recognition of and protection from heat injury. Heat injuries occur when your body temperature rises above normal, or when your body is no longer able to regulate heat loss. Risk factors for heat injury include high temperatures, high humidity, sun exposure, excessive activity and exertion, coffee and alcohol, certain medications such as a diuretic, and illnesses, especially those causing vomiting and diarrhea.

Heat injuries are generally defined in 3 stages: dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Dehydration is the first stage and the mildest form of injury where your body suffers from lack of fluid. Heat exhaustion is the next step beyond dehydration and can result in serious injury or even death if not treated immediately. Heat stroke is the most serious form of heat injury and is a life-threatening emergency.

Since heat injuries can be life-threatening, it is important to recognize the signs early and seek medical attention.

You can catch heat injuries early by looking out for the warning signs, including: thirst, headache, nausea, cramps, dizziness, weakness, confusion, hot or dry skin, weak but rapid heart rate, low blood pressure, and rapid breathing. Another often over-looked sign of dehydration is dark colored urine. Some recommend drinking fluid until your urine is light-colored; however, check with your doctor first (some patients with certain medical problems may want to avoid this strategy).

To avoid heat injuries, drink early and often. Don't wait to become thirsty. Water is usually best; however, a good quality



sports drink will also help to replace salts and minerals lost through sweat. Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and loose, light-colored clothing which covers as much skin as possible. Avoid sun exposure in the middle of the day between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and schedule plenty of rest time in cool, shaded areas, as part of your trip. Finally, allow time to acclimatize to your environment, avoid caffeine and alcohol, and don't ignore the early warning signs of heat injury!

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Pack convenient, healthy, and portable snacks instead of using vending machines stocked with candy bars or greasy chips. Take along packages of dried fruits or nuts, such as almonds, cashews, or walnuts. Make sure to eat slowly and don't wait too long between meals. Otherwise, you might find yourself too hungry and unable to make sensible choices. Keep in mind that it takes twenty minutes for your brain and stomach to talk to each other to let you know that you're full. You can eat a heck of a lot of food in twenty minutes!

When dining out at a restaurant, take the time to carefully read the menu. Select foods that are steamed, roasted, or broiled. Order a salad to eat with your main course. That will fill you up so that you eat less of the more calorie-dense main meal. Ask for salad dressing and sauces to be on the side, try to avoid fried foods, and split dessert with your partner! Let water be

your main beverage, and carry bottled water with you during the day to stay hydrated.

While at the airport, you may not have many nutritious food options. Try not to wait to buy food on the airplane. The best strategy is to bring your own food, and pack sandwiches made with whole grain and peanut butter or lean meats along with an apple or banana. If you have time, explore the airport for healthier food alternatives. You will get your body moving and will more likely be able to find healthier foods.

Finally, when you get home, if you haven't followed these guidelines, don't waste your energy on regret. Drive to the supermarket (or better yet, walk), if you can, and load up on healthy foods. Then start looking forward to your next trip!



## Preparing for Adventure Travel

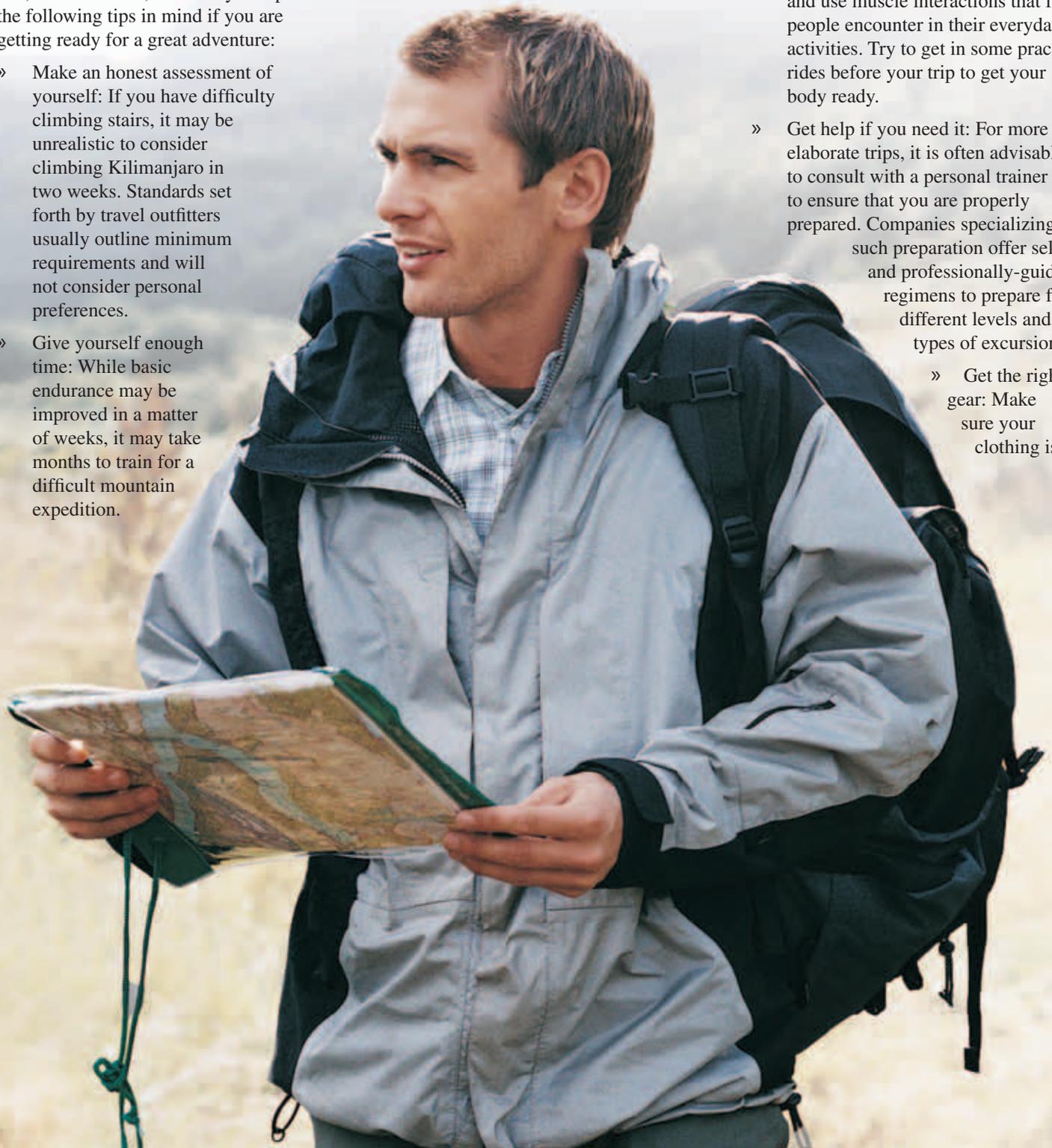
Many people long for a vacation of lounging by a pool or shopping in an exotic port of call, but a large number of tourists prefer to get their hands dirty by engaging in adventure travel. This type of travel encourages travelers to step outside of their normal lives and comfort zones and seek experiences that are unfamiliar and, in some cases, even risky. Keep the following tips in mind if you are getting ready for a great adventure:

- » Make an honest assessment of yourself: If you have difficulty climbing stairs, it may be unrealistic to consider climbing Kilimanjaro in two weeks. Standards set forth by travel outfitters usually outline minimum requirements and will not consider personal preferences.
- » Give yourself enough time: While basic endurance may be improved in a matter of weeks, it may take months to train for a difficult mountain expedition.

Ensure enough time to allow for adjusting to high altitudes.

- » Keep in mind medical conditions: Be sure to check with your doctor before committing to a demanding trip and be honest with your medical history.

- » Tailor workouts to activities: Interval cardio exercises can help build the endurance needed for most activities, but the specific exercises will depend on your itinerary.
- » Practice beforehand: Some activities, such as horseback riding, are almost impossible to replicate in the gym and use muscle interactions that few people encounter in their everyday activities. Try to get in some practice rides before your trip to get your body ready.
- » Get help if you need it: For more elaborate trips, it is often advisable to consult with a personal trainer to ensure that you are properly prepared. Companies specializing in such preparation offer self- and professionally-guided regimens to prepare for different levels and types of excursions.
  - » Get the right gear: Make sure your clothing is



## Travel Medical Kits

appropriate, both functionally and culturally, for your destination. Footwear should be worn well in advance, both to break it in and to toughen up your feet to guard against blisters. Don't forget to pack clothing that can help protect against insects and the sun.

- » Beyond fitness there are other things to prepare for whenever you travel.
- » Be aware of the typical weather of your destination specific to the time of year.
- » Stay away from dangerous animals.
- » Learn a few key phrases in the native dialect.
- » Make sure you have travelers' insurance and that it covers adventure travel, including evacuation coverage.
- » Try to carry at least a little local currency, and make sure you have cell phone coverage at your destination.
- » Finally, be sure to check with your travel clinic at least 2 months prior to departing for necessary medical information and immunizations. Try to supply a detailed itinerary, since activities may be well away from the urban centers tourists usually frequent. Try to adhere as closely as you can with their recommendations and supplied prescriptions, and do not hesitate to see a physician if you develop illness after your return.

Adventure travel offers an opportunity for a simple vacation to become the experience of a lifetime. By preparing properly, you can help ensure that this experience is a good one. Good luck, be safe, and healthy travels.

Well seasoned travelers know that when a sudden medical problem occurs, it can interrupt an otherwise perfectly planned vacation. Travelers may find themselves confined to their hotel rooms coping with an illness or resort to the local urgent care center or emergency department. There are ways to be prepared for many medical situations that occur, thereby reducing the amount of time away from activities and responsibilities. Many people travel with a medical kit which contains treatments for the most common medical situations happening away from home.

Travel medical kits can be purchased whole or constructed by a traveler in anticipation of the possible medical conditions expected at a specific destination. At a minimum one should keep in mind the following three overarching considerations when purchasing or constructing a travel medical kit. The kit should contain supplies needed to manage pre-existing medical conditions or treat any worsening or flare of those conditions. It should also contain supplies to prevent illnesses related to the area in which the traveler is visiting. Lastly, the kit should contain supplies to treat minor health problems as they arise.

If a traveler chooses to assemble a travel medical kit at home, there are a few items which should be considered to be included in the kit. Some basic medications include Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Motrin (ibuprofen) for fever or pain. Travelers should also consider including medication for an upset stomach or diarrhea. Common medications to help remedy those conditions include Immodium (loperamide), oral rehydration solution packets, and prescription antibiotics. Also to be considered are items to treat throat and respiratory symptoms, such as antihistamines, decongestants, cough suppressants/expectorants, and throat lozenges. An EpiPen should be included for travelers known to have severe allergic reactions. All medication, prescription or over-the-counter, should be stored in its original container with easily identifiable labels.

Basic first aid items recommended for travel medical kits include disposable gloves, adhesive bandages, gauze, adhesive tape, elastic bandage wrap, antiseptic, cotton swabs, tweezers, scissors, antibacterial ointment, 1% hydrocortisone cream, anti-itch gel or cream for insect bites and stings, aloe gel for sunburn, moleskin for blisters, digital thermometer, saline eye drops, and a first-aid quick reference card. Consider packing tweezers and scissors in checked baggage if flying since they may be considered sharp objects subject to confiscation at security check-points in airports. Other important items include insect repellent, sunscreen, and antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Lastly, travelers should consider including a contact card containing important information such as a close contact at the traveler's origin, the name of the traveler's medical provider at home, hospitals and clinics at the traveler's destination, and embassy or consular information at the traveler's destination.

Ensuring healthy travels involves a certain level of preparedness on behalf of the traveler. Traveling with a medical kit provides a higher level of preparedness for the traveler. Complete guidance regarding travel medical kits can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website or from your local travel medicine clinics.



## Exercising While on the Road



Regular exercise is vital to staying healthy. Those who exercise live longer and feel better. Traveling can be stressful both mentally and physically. Just because you are on the road doesn't mean that you have to give up any resemblance of an exercise routine. With a new city, unfamiliar bed, take-out food, and lack of a routine, it's easy to not exercise. But exercising can help you increase your energy levels, maintain good sleep patterns, avoid weight gain, reduce stress, and reduce muscle fatigue.

Many hotels have gyms now, but quality of fitness equipment varies dramatically between establishments. Find out if the hotel has a pool or gym before you leave and adjust accordingly. If you already belong to a gym, check to see if they have a location near your hotel. If neither of these options exists, the hotel might have good suggestions for walking or running routes around the facility. Keeping things simple improves the chances that you'll exercise and maintain a healthy lifestyle while traveling. Jogging in place for 30 minutes or performing a series of pushups, sit-ups, and squats while watching a television show can be a great source of exercise.

The next time you are traveling, think of the follow tips to help you stay fit while on the road.

- » Pack workout clothes and shoes
- » Plan ahead and check for availability of hotel/local gyms
- » Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- » Check out local TV channels for workout programs
- » Stretch/tone muscles with traditional floor exercises
- » Work out in the mornings or immediately after your meetings end
- » Walk whenever possible instead of driving or other transportation
- » Aim for at least 20 minutes of exercising a day while traveling
- » Limit the amount of high salt and fatty foods
- » Commit yourself to a routine before you leave for the trip

## Motion Sickness While Traveling

Motion sickness is a relatively common syndrome that occurs when travelers are exposed to real or perceived motion. It is most common while riding on boats, but can occur during other forms of travel as well. Although some people are more susceptible to the effects of motion sickness, such as women, children, and migraine sufferers, it can occur in almost anyone in the right situation.

Normally, when the body is in motion the brain compensates based on senses transmitted by your inner ear. Motion sickness occurs when conflicting information is sent to the brain from other senses such as vision. This is why activities such as reading can worsen motion sickness; the print stays still while the world around you is still moving, giving conflicting information to the brain.

The most common symptoms of motion sickness are easy to recognize and include dizziness, nausea, sweating, and a

general feeling of uneasiness or sickness. Although symptoms will go away once the motion is gone, treatment can help alleviate them during travel. Repeated exposure tends to decrease symptoms, and limiting sensory exposure, for example closing your eyes, can also help.

Medication options should be taken before the motion occurs if possible, and the most commonly used include antihistamines such as Dramamine and anticholinergics such as Scopolamine patches. The most common side effect of these medications is drowsiness. Other medications can also be effective but should generally only be used if the previous medications are not effective. Alternative therapies such as herbs, acupuncture, and magnets are not proven to work.

Motion sickness is a common problem for travelers but can be managed well by trying to limit conflicting sensory information and using medication if necessary.

## Travel Medicine Clinic at Fort Myer



Are you planning on traveling internationally in the near future? If you are visiting a location in Africa, Asia, or Central/South America, an appointment at the travel medicine clinic can help you prepare for any disease risks you may encounter.

- The Family Health Center of Fort Myer (Rader Army Health Clinic) Travel Medicine Clinic is open on Tuesdays from 0900 to 1600.
- Appointments can be made by calling 703-696-3439.
- Schedule your appointment approximately 4-6 weeks prior to your departure date.
- Bring your medical records with you, including all prior vaccination records.

## Information Sources



Shoreland's Travel Health Online — [www.tripprep.com](http://www.tripprep.com)

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Traveler's Health Website — [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)
- Travel Notice Website — [www.cdc.gov/travel/notices.aspx](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/notices.aspx)

U.S. Department of State

- Travel & Business Website — [www.state.gov/travelandbusiness](http://www.state.gov/travelandbusiness)
- Embassy & Consulate Website — [usembassy.state.gov](http://usembassy.state.gov)

World Health Organization Travel Website — [www.who.int/topics/travel/en](http://www.who.int/topics/travel/en)

International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers — [www.iamat.org](http://www.iamat.org)

International Society of Travel Medicine — [www.istm.org](http://www.istm.org)

American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene — [www.astmh.org](http://www.astmh.org)

U.S. Army Public Health Command — <http://phc.amedd.army.mil>

*Tip: Check out these websites for more information about staying healthy while traveling abroad.*

## Fast Facts

- The vast majority of travel-related illnesses are preventable.
- You should visit the travel clinic 4-6 weeks before traveling to Africa, Asia, Central America, or South America.
- Vaccines are the safest, most effective means of preventing illness.
- Avoiding insect bites by using DEET-containing repellents is the only method of preventing some insect-borne diseases.
- One of the best ways to reduce the risk of illness while traveling is to wash your hands frequently.

## Healthy Travels

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