

Health Guidelines for Travel Abroad



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KEYWORDS

• Travel health • Travel abroad • Pretravel Assessment • Posttravel Assessment

KEY POINTS

- Primary care providers manage the majority of travel medical care. The purpose of the pretravel visit are risk assessment and mitigation.
- Encourage travelers to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program for travel advisories.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention travel website offers destination-specific, point-of-care resources for clinicians and travelers.
- Travelers who are visiting friends and relatives are a high-risk group.
- The most common syndromes in returning travelers are gastrointestinal, febrile, and dermatologic.

INTRODUCTION

Most travel medical care is provided by patients' primary care physicians; only 10% of international travelers visit a travel clinic. The main purposes for travel include vacationing, visiting friends and family, business, and for educational purposes.

PRETRAVEL CONSULTATION

The purposes of the pretravel consultation are to estimate risk and provide recommendations to mitigate risk.

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TRAVELER BACKGROUND

The initial pretravel assessment should focus on specific aspects regarding the health background of the traveler (**Box 1**). A full history and physical examination, including a review of immunizations, allergies, medications, and chronic medical conditions should be explored. Special attention and tailored recommendations should be given to those with chronic disease states, including congestive heart failure, diabetes, mental health issues, and immunocompromised states. It is important to note recent hospitalizations and surgeries and to assess the risk associated with traveling after these events. Prior travel history may provide clues regarding intolerance to certain antimalarials or other medications.

TRIP SPECIFICS

Review the itinerary of the traveler, including types of travel, the reason for travel, and accommodations. Country-specific risks and travel advisories should be discussed in detail with the traveler by reviewing resources like the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (<https://step.state.gov/>). By assessing these specific aspects, the provider can obtain a wealth of knowledge that can be synthesized to help the traveler manage possible risks.

Box 1 **Risk assessment**

Medical history

- Medications
- Allergies
- Immunizations
- Chronic disease states
- Mental health
- Hospitalizations
- Surgeries
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding
- Previous travel
- Previous use of antimalarials, antibiotics
- Plans for repeat travel in next 1 to 2 years

Trip itinerary

- Location
- Dates and season
- Activities, mass gatherings
- Reasons for travel
- Accommodations
- Travel insurance

Data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC yellow book 2018: health information for international travel. New York: Oxford University Press; 2017.

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