

*Australians are travelling overseas in ever-increasing numbers. Whatever your age or destination, properly preparing before you leave and staying in good health while travelling can help you to have a happy and enjoyable trip. Your local LiveLife Pharmacy are in the perfect position to help advise you and to ensure you have a safe, happy and healthy holiday. This information leaflet will cover some of the more common "travel conditions" and how they are best prevented/managed.*

## **Before travelling, what should we think about?**

- **Make an appointment with your doctor or travel clinic at least six to eight weeks before you depart:**
  - For a basic health check-up
  - To find out if any vaccinations are required for your destination
  - To obtain prescriptions for any necessary precautionary medicines to take on your holiday
  - To obtain a list of prescribed medicines from your doctor to avoid any delays in customs/confiscation of important medicines
- **Think about what you would do if you became ill/injured overseas—have you paid for travel insurance to ensure you get the best medical care required?**
- **Have you got an appropriate first aid kit packed? This is something your LiveLife Pharmacy staff can help with! (See page 4)**

## **Vaccine preventable diseases**

*Common vaccine-preventable diseases include hepatitis A/B, Typhoid, Tetanus, Cholera, Polio, rabies and Japanese encephalitis*

Vaccines can prevent you from contracting some of these diseases, but it's also important to remember:

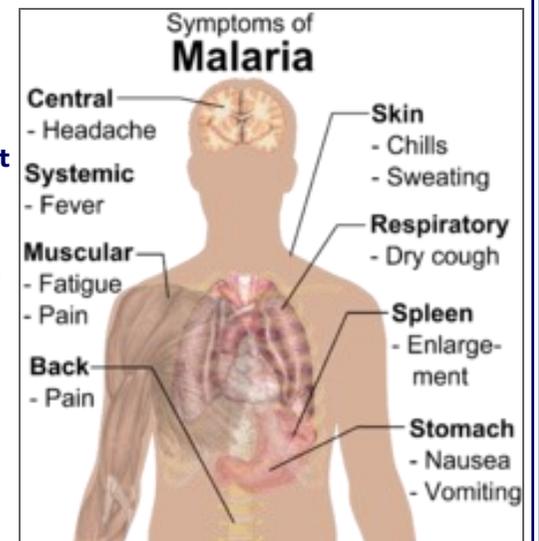
- **New vaccines are constantly being released and diseases continue to evolve.**
- **Vaccinations may be an entry requirement of some countries, which means that you may be refused entry or required to have the vaccination at the border. It is recommended to have any vaccinations needed prior to leaving Australia. Check [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)**
- **It's never too late to vaccinate; however it is important to remember that some vaccines require a long period to take effect and more than one dose may be needed—get these organised as early as possible.**
- **You may need boosters for childhood vaccines; e.g. tetanus, hepatitis etc**
- **Health risks within a country can vary from one region to another and local authorities may be slow to announce outbreaks of disease. New diseases (e.g. pandemic influenza) can also appear suddenly. Register with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) and check for updates regularly.**
- **Common illnesses that travellers can pick up include those which result from eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Find out whether tap water and local food is safe to consume before you depart for your destination.**

## **Malaria prevention**

Malaria is a parasitic disease that involves high fevers, shaking, chills, flu-like symptoms, and anaemia. It is caused by a parasite that is passed from one human to another by the bite of infected mosquitoes. After infection, the parasites travel through the bloodstream to the liver and infect red blood cells. Malaria is a **POTENTIALLY FATAL DISEASE**—leading to 1 million deaths in the world every year. Most Australian cases of malaria are contracted in Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Indonesia, and deaths are often caused by a complication of malaria known as cerebral falciparum.

Preventing mosquito bites is important as **drug prevention/prophylaxis is only 75-95% effective even if taken correctly**. Patients will need to obtain a prescription from their GP, then start taking this preventative medicine a few days/weeks before travel, continue whilst travelling and for a number of weeks after returning to Australia. The exact timing does depend on the particular medicine chosen by the GP. Your pharmacist will advise.

**NB. Advise travellers to take antimalarials with them rather than buying them overseas where fake or substandard antimalarials may be available.**



## **Motion sickness prevention**

Motion sickness is a very common disturbance of the inner ear that is caused by repeated motion. In addition to sea travel, motion sickness can develop from the movement of a car or from turbulence in an airplane. The symptoms of motion sickness are nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sweating, and a sense of feeling unwell. These symptoms arise from the inner ear due to changes in one's sense of balance and equilibrium.

While it may be impossible to prevent all cases of motion sickness, the following tips can help you prevent or lessen the severity of motion sickness:

- Avoid excessive alcohol and foods or liquids that "do not agree with you" or make you feel unusually full. Heavy, spicy, or fat-rich foods may worsen motion sickness in some people.
- Avoid strong food odours.
- Try to choose a seat where you will experience the least motion (i.e. middle of an airplane over the wing, lower level cabins near the centre of a ship).
- Do not sit facing backwards from your direction of travel.
- Sit in the front seat of a car.
- Avoid reading while travelling if you are prone to motion sickness.
- When travelling by car or boat, it can sometimes help to keep your gaze fixed on the horizon or on a fixed point.
- Open a vent or source of fresh air if possible.
- Isolate yourself from others who may be suffering from motion sickness.
- Over the counter medicines can help to prevent motion sickness. Kwells/ Travacalm HO are generally the preferred method of prevention, as these medicines contain "hyoscine," an ingredient that will work in your inner ear on your sense of balance. We recommend adult travellers to take 1 tablet 30 mins prior to departure, then repeating every 4-6 hours up to a maximum of 4 tablets daily. It is important to note that this medicine is a "prevention" rather than a "treatment" and should be taken for the entire journey. For those travellers that do not wish to take something for the entire journey, we generally recommend a ginger supplement. Ginger may be taken when feeling ill and will help to relieve mild nausea and stomach discomfort. However, it is important to note that it is not as potent or effective as the preventative methods mentioned earlier. Remember that some motion sickness medicines can cause drowsiness and other side effects – consult your pharmacist!



## **Avoiding insect and mosquito bites**

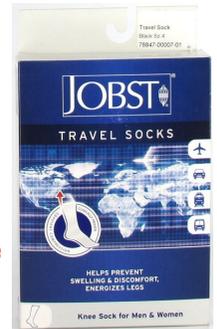
There are a number of health conditions in addition to malaria that you can contract while overseas, particularly in tropical areas. Be sure to take measures to avoid being bitten:

- Avoid exposure to mosquitoes from dusk to dawn; use mosquito nets treated with insecticide and wear light-coloured, protective clothing (trousers and long-sleeved shirt).
- Use an insect repellent containing at least 20% DEET (Caution in young children and in pregnancy).
- Insecticide-treated clothing, electric fans, screened accommodation, air conditioning, mosquito coils, vaporising mats and insect-repellent soap are also useful.

*NB. Although some people may wish to try to alternative methods to avoid insects and mosquitoes, that there is no evidence that thiamine (vitamin B1), garlic, yeast extracts or tea tree oil are effective in preventing mosquito bites. Buzzers have also never been shown to be effective.*

## **Avoiding DVT**

DVT is a condition in which a blood clot forms in the deep veins of the legs. If the blood flow from the legs to the heart is hampered by, for example, a person not moving around for a long time, then blood can pool in the leg veins, sometimes leading to a clot forming inside the leg veins — so-called deep vein thrombosis. The situation becomes life-threatening when a piece of the blood clot breaks off, travels downstream through the heart into the pulmonary circulation system, and becomes lodged in the lung (pulmonary embolism). Severe cases of pulmonary embolism can lead to collapse, abnormally low blood pressure and sudden death.



How can you avoid a DVT when on a long flight?

- Wear flight socks that provide compression and avoid DVT (our LiveLife pharmacies will either already stock these or will certainly be able to order them in!)
- Drink plenty of water during the flight.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks before and during the flight.
- Wear clothing that does not restrict your movement and avoid tight underwear.
- Don't take sleeping tablets when flying as the effect of these will further limit your mobility.
- If possible, don't let your thighs press on the edge of your seat — slide your legs and bottom forward so that the angle between your legs and abdomen is more open and your bottom is nearer the front of the seat. (This may not be possible if you are tall or have long legs).
- Use footrests where available or rest your feet on luggage to get your feet up.
- Do in-flight exercises every half-hour throughout the flight that include flexing and stretching your legs and feet.
- Occasionally, and only if it is safe to do so, take a walk around the aircraft cabin.

## Avoiding food and water-borne disease

One of the most common ways a traveller gets sick whilst on holiday is by eating/drinking contaminated food and water.

Here are some helpful tips you can give your customers before they begin their overseas adventure:

- Regularly wash the hands and keep an alcohol hand rub with you at all times.
- When consuming raw fruit and vegetables, it is important to wash them thoroughly. Avoid fruit and vegetables that cannot be peeled.
- Where possible, avoid eating at roadside stalls, unless the food is served hot and immediately after cooking.
- There is some risk of contaminated cutlery. In extreme cases, you may wish to clean your cutlery with alcohol swabs before use.
- Avoid eating raw or reheated foods (especially raw meat and seafood).
- Avoid tap water, ice cubes and ice blocks.
- Bottled water/soft-drinks are preferred; however, ensure the seal is intact before consumption.
- Caution with fruit juices and cordials, as these may have been diluted with contaminated water without your knowledge.
- Do not open your mouth when showering and brush your teeth using bottled water.
- Caution when swimming; although pool may be chlorinated, this water is still not sterile.



## Is there anything to think about after getting back home?

Please note that a post-travel check up from the GP is recommended for those people suffering with any new symptoms. It is also important to note that tropical diseases and parasitic infestations are best treated early, as some can be fatal if left untreated.

The list below shows examples of symptoms indicating a patient may need a post-travel check-up:

- Fevers—these are particularly serious if you have visited a malarious country, even if you have been taking malaria pills. Malaria can develop years after your visit.
- Persistent diarrhoea or vomiting
- Stomach pains
- Dark coloured urine
- Skin rashes or lumps
- Persistent cough
- Headaches
- Joint pains



Traveller's diarrhoea sometimes occurs once a person returns home from their holiday. Oral rehydration solutions are scientifically formulated to contain the correct balance of electrolytes and glucose to provide rapid rehydration and should be the FIRST CHOICE for patients suffering with this condition, especially in groups with a higher-risk of dehydration (i.e. children and the elderly). Anti-motility drugs such as Imodium are also useful. These products work by slowing the motility of your intestines and thus helping to slow down



the frequency and urgency of needing to go to the toilet. This in turn gives you more control over your bowels. *Please refer to the "Diarrhoea" information leaflet for further information on this topic.*

If you feel well upon return, you may not need a post-travel check-up from the GP. However, if you have visited a developing country, you may benefit from a worming treatment of "mebendazole" in case you have picked up some unusual internal worms. This is especially important if you have been "roughing it" or quite "adventurous" in your destinations/activities. NB. Travellers need a higher dose than persons who may use mebendazole in a 'developed country' setting for threadworms, and we would suggest Mebendazole (Vermox, Combantrin-1, Amcal worming tablets) 100mg— one tablet twice daily for 3 days. They are not absorbed into the body .



## **Creating a LiveLife travel kit for the journey**

*To assist you in planning an overseas holiday, our Pharmacists have prepared a checklist providing you with a suggested list for your holiday medical needs.*

- **Gut/Stomach/Gastro** (Please see "Diarrhoea" module for further important information on traveller's diarrhoea)

- Diarrhoea → Gastrostop, Immodium, Diarrhoea Relief
- Stomach Cramps → Buscopan
- Dehydration → Hydralyte sachets
- Constipation → Coloxyl & Senna
- Indigestion → Gaviscon or Zantac
- Nausea → Ginger tablets

- **Pain**

- Mild → Panadol, paracetamol
- Inflammation → Nurofen, ibuprofen

- **Wounds**

- Mild Infection → Betadine Anti-septic Liquid/cream
- Sunburn → Solosite
- Bandages, Band-aids, Scissors, Tape, Waterproof dressing, saline solution, blister dressings.

- **Other**

- Itch Topical → Itch-eze plus Crm
- Allergy → Telfast, Fexorelief, Lorastyne, Phenergan
- Eye Care → Murine or Visine Range
- Motion Sickness → Travacalm HO
- Colds & Flu → Cold & Flu tablets, eg Amcal Cold & Flu
- Urinary Tract Infection → Ural
- Thrush Treatment → Canesten, Resolve, Fluconazole tablets

- **Other Important Items**

- Sunscreen, Insect repellent, Multi Vitamin
- Thermometer, Flight socks, Aquatabs, Face masks
- Hand sanitizer, Saline Nasal Spray, Ear Plugs

- **From the Doctor**

- Antibiotics, Anti-Malarials, Vaccines, Letter from Dr (with a medicine list)

