



# Know before you go

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**So there you are: the** bags are all packed, taxi's on the way, pets at the pet hotel and the oven safely turned off...

and you think, I wonder if there is anything special I need to do before flying to (insert your destination here)? Yup! There was.

Well before heading off to most parts of the world, you will want to visit your local travel clinic to find out what health issues should be on your radar, what vaccines you should be getting and other precautions you should consider. In fact, some destinations won't even let you in unless you have certification of immunization. (But even if they did, would you really want to take a chance with yellow fever, malaria, hepatitis or Japanese encephalitis? We don't think so either.

If you are planning to travel internationally, start out with a visit to the travel clinic in your community. For most residents of the Coast Garibaldi region, that means the public health unit, each of which offers travel services at specified times. Call ahead to book an appointment. In addition to health units and dedicated Vancouver Coastal Health travel clinics, there are also private clinics offering similar services.

Where you go is less important than going at all, and doing so well ahead of travelling because many of the vaccines take up to several weeks to be active. For example, travelling to Saudi Arabia as many people will be doing for the Hajj in December means having proof of vaccination with you for meningococcal quadravalent vaccine at least 10 days before arrival. Travelling to Central or South America? Yellow fever vaccination is mandatory of entry into some countries in those regions.

Not only should you be aware of special vaccinations needed for travel, your routine immunizations should also be up to date. In Canada that includes diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella. The travel clinic will know which vaccines are recommended, and mandatory, for your particular destination. They will also give you the time frame for receiving the medications, some of which may require a full course beginning weeks in advance of travel. In other words, start your travel planning early with a visit six to eight weeks or more, prior to travel.

Vaccinations are not the only medication that may be needed. If you are travelling to an area where malaria occurs, you will need to obtain a supply of anti-malarial medication. This is to be taken for a full week before departure, the entire duration of travel in the malarial area, and for four weeks after leaving the area.

With the vaccinations and other pre-travel medications out of the way, what else should you know about travelling abroad. Again, the travel clinic can help with information on health and hygiene, avoiding traveller's diarrhea—not an unrelated topic—and even provide supplies you might need such as mosquito nets, water purifiers, repellents and more.

Staying healthy during travel is usually a matter of common sense with a bit of extra attention given to insect, food, water and security precautions. With just a few changes in lifestyle, your trip will be an exciting, healthy and rewarding adventure. Bon Voyage!

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