

Ecuador

Basic Protective Measures

Many travel-related health and safety problems can be significantly reduced through appropriate behavior by the traveler. Risk can be minimized by adherence to the following measures.

Health

Insect Precautions

- Wear clothing that exposes as little skin as is practicable.
- Apply a repellent containing the insecticide DEET (concentration 30-35%) or picaridin (concentration 20% or greater for tropical travelers).
 - Picaridin products in the U.S. with 20% concentration include Natrapel (Tendercorp) and Picaridin Insect Repellent (Sawyer). Picaridin is also known as Icaridin in some countries.
 - Picaridin has a pleasant smell, an advantage over DEET.
- The repellent should be applied to all exposed nonsensitive areas of the body. Frequent application ensures continuous protection.
- The time of day and type of insects to be avoided determine when the repellent should be applied.
 - Mosquitoes that transmit malaria (*Anopheles* mosquitoes) are generally night biters. In risk areas, be especially vigilant in applying repellent from dusk to dawn.
 - Mosquitoes that transmit dengue, chikungunya, and yellow fever (*Aedes* mosquitoes) are generally day biters. In risk areas, be especially vigilant in applying repellent during daytime hours, especially during peak biting times during the early morning hours and again in late afternoon.
 - Mosquitoes that transmit West Nile virus and Japanese encephalitis (*Culex* mosquitoes) are most active at dusk and again at dawn. In risk areas, be especially vigilant in applying repellent from dusk to dawn.
- Consider treating outer clothing, tents, and sleeping bag liners with permethrin (or other pyrethroid) when traveling in an area of very high risk for malaria or other mosquito-borne or tick-borne diseases.
- If not sleeping in a sealed, air-conditioned room, sleep under a permethrin-impregnated bed net when at high risk of malaria. Regularly check the net for rips and tears, and keep it tucked in around the bed at all times. Ensure that all open windows have insect screens.
- Use an aerosol insecticide before going to bed and a vaporizer device throughout the night.
- Outdoors, a smoldering pyrethroid coil can be used to reduce flying insects.
- In areas where tick-borne disease is a risk, perform a full body check at least once a day.

Safe Food and Beverages

- Always wash hands with soap before eating and after using the toilet.
- Avoid purchasing food from market stalls and street vendors.
- Avoid buffets without food covers or fly controls.
- Avoid high risk food such as shellfish, raw or undercooked foods, unpasteurized dairy products, mayonnaise, unpeeled fruits, and salads.
- Avoid tap water and drinks/ice made from tap water, unless advised of their safety by a reliable source.
- Use sealed bottled water or treated water for drinking and brushing teeth. (See *Treating Water*.)

Blood-Borne and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

- STDs, hepatitis B, and HIV are generally more prevalent in developing countries. Unprotected casual sex whether with the local population or with fellow travelers is always high risk.
- Inhibitions are diminished when traveling away from the social constraints of home. In addition, excess alcohol and

other recreational drugs can influence behavior and encourage unintentional risk exposure.

- HIV and hepatitis B may be transmitted through blood, blood products, and contaminated surgical or dental instruments. These may be required following accidents or trauma. Consider carrying a needle and suture kit for high risk areas. If possible, defer medical treatment and travel to a facility where safety can be assured. Tattooing and body piercing carry similar risks.

Swimming and Water Exposure

- Currents, tides, and underwater hazards put swimmers at risk of injury or drowning. Heed posted warnings and avoid beaches that are not patrolled. Do not swim alone or after dark and do not walk on any beach after dark.
- Wear appropriate footwear when walking, wading, or swimming to avoid injury, parasites, and poisonous plants or animals.
- In tropical waters, watch for jellyfish, sea anemones, and corals.
- Avoid any exposure (even wading) in water known to be infected with schistosomiasis (bilharzia).
- Avoid water where there is sewage contamination or algae present.
- Sand may be contaminated in areas frequented by animals. Sit on a towel, blanket, or piece of clothing if chairs or hammocks are not available. Shake out all fabrics thoroughly after use.

Rabies

- Never presume an animal is free of rabies.
- Don't stroke or handle pets or unknown animals. Children need to be closely supervised.
- If bitten, scratched, or licked on broken skin, cleanse the wound immediately with soapy water and seek postexposure treatment for rabies.

Skin/Wound Care

- Broken skin may become infected and lead to serious problems. Any bite, cut, or broken skin should be cleaned with safe water. Apply an antiseptic as a solution or spray. Avoid creams since they can trap dirt.
- Increasing pain, redness, or discharge from a cut suggests a spreading infection and may require antibiotic treatment. Seek medical help.

Tuberculosis

- Tuberculosis is prevalent in most developing countries and also presents risk in certain developed countries. Avoid crowded public transportation or crowded public places that are poorly ventilated.
- Move away immediately from anyone with a chronic or heavy cough.
- Screen domestic help for tuberculosis.
- Long-stay residents should have a TB skin test pre-departure and once per year thereafter.

Pre-Travel Checklist

- Before departure, ensure adequate supplies of any medications for the full journey and that they are securely packaged in their original containers and carried in multiple places. Travelers should have a letter from a physician, stating the condition and the medications and/or medical supplies being carried.
- Always arrange adequate medical and evacuation insurance when traveling. Ensure all preexisting medical issues are declared to the insurer so that non-covered conditions are ascertained in advance. Have the contact details recorded and accessible at all times during travel.
- Pre-departure medical and dental exams are advised.
- Pack a spare pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses, and adequate cleansing solution, if applicable.
- Express any concerns about jet lag, altitude illness, or motion sickness to a travel health provider who may suggest suitable medications.

- Pack sunglasses, wide-brimmed hats, sunscreen lotions, and lip protection to avoid sun exposure problems during travel.

Safety

Safety and Crime Avoidance

- Travelers should be sure at least 1 other person knows their whereabouts and expected schedule at all times.
- Use extra caution in tourist sites, market places, elevators, crowded subways, train stations and festivals, and avoid marginal areas of cities.
- Use only "registered" taxis, preferably radio taxis.
- Avoid visible signs of wealth in dress or jewelry.
- Travelers should be constantly attentive to surroundings and be wary of any stranger who initiates any form of conversation or physical contact in any way, no matter how accidental it may seem.
- Carry only a photocopy of the passport face page and legal entry stamp; leave the actual passport in a hotel safe or other safe place.
- Wear hand bags across the chest to prevent theft.
- Be familiar with common local scams and distraction techniques.
- If confronted, give up valuables. Money and passports can be replaced; life cannot.
- U.S. citizens can register foreign trip and residence information with the Department of State at travelregistration.state.gov, which facilitates communication and assistance in case of an emergency.

Safety in the Hotel

- Keep hotel doors locked at all times.
- Look for fire safety instructions in the hotel room. Become familiar with escape routes upon arrival.
- Keep valuables in the room safe or the hotel safe.

Safety When You Drive

- Try to drive with windows closed.
- Keep car doors locked at all times.
- Wear seat belts at all times.
- Avoid driving at night or alone, and never drive outside urban areas after dark.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Never drive a motorcycle or scooter abroad.
- If available, long-stay and business travelers should arrange a locally purchased mobile phone to be in the vehicle whenever traveling.

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